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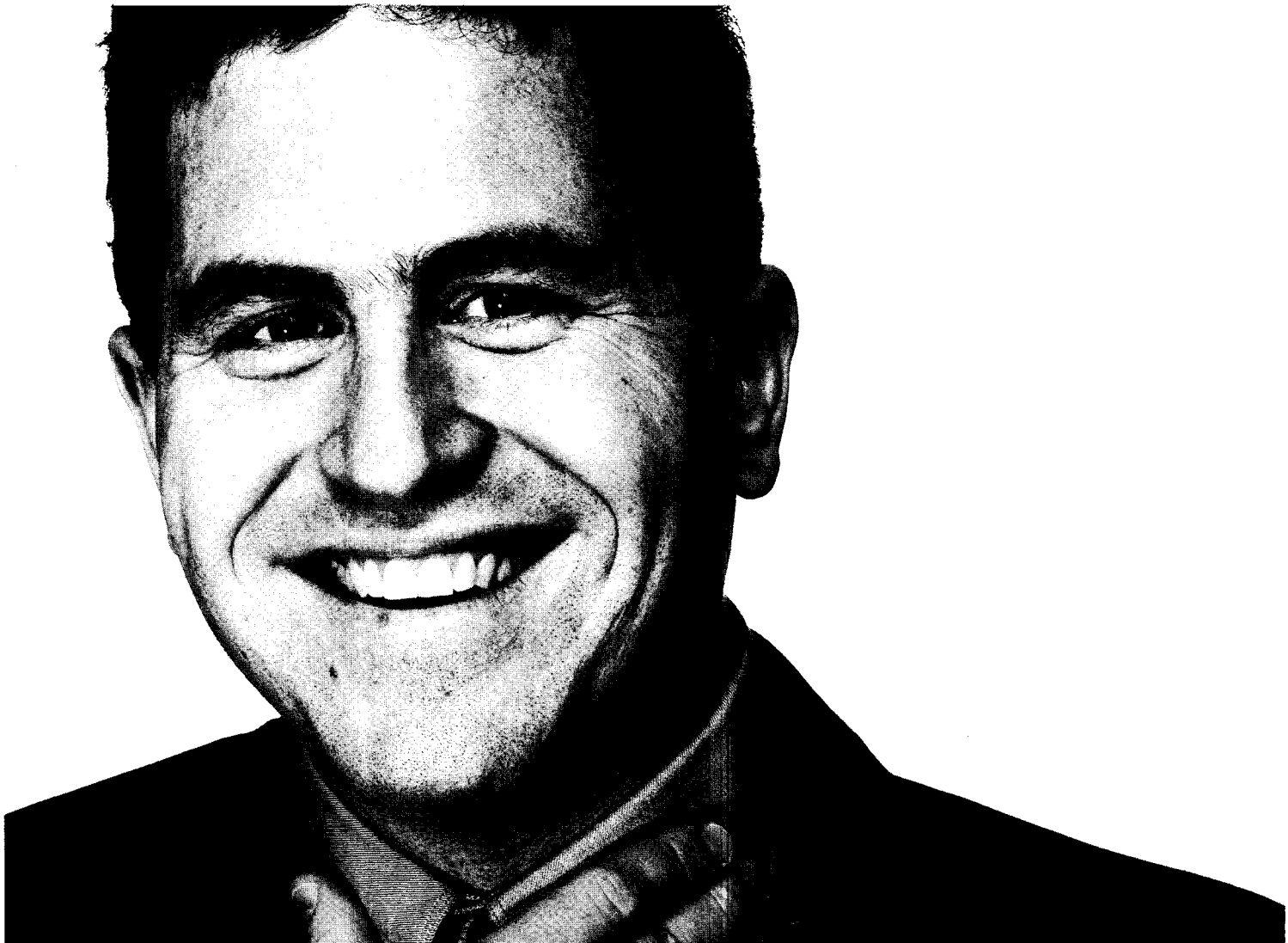

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

AUGUST 14, 1995

FOUNDED 1914
WASHINGTON, D.C.
ISSUE 4,204

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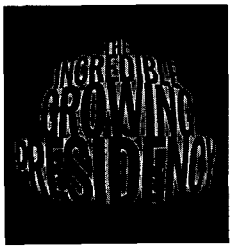

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THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 213, Number 7, Issue 4,204, August 14, 1995. (Printed in the U.S. on July 26, 1995.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 9 & 16, July 17 & 24, Aug. 21 & 28, and Sept. 18 & 25, 1995) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. The New Republic Advertising Sales Office (212) 702-4882. Yearly subscriptions, $69.97; foreign, $99.97; Canada, $84.97. Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage & handling). © 1995 by The New Republic, Inc. (ISSN 0028-6583). Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Microform, CD-ROM, issue and article copies are available through University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone 1-800-521-0600. Internet mail address: tnr@aol.com Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscribers: Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 602, Mount Morris, IL 61054. For subscription problems call 800-827-1289.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Pet peeves

To the editors:

It is one thing to argue the case against anthropomorphism in the treatment of animals by humans. It is quite another to spill over into a misanthropic assault on pets per se. Richard Klein seems far too concerned with how cats and dogs die, rather than how human beings choose to live. The fact that a few unpleasant politicians have had famous pets, or that some advertisers exceed the boundaries of good taste in marketing, should hardly generate a liberal backlash against the ownership and love of pets. Dogs and cats uniformly repay love, kindness and loyalty with the same. When human beings show a similar disposition toward one another, then Klein's concerns of narcissism might have some relevance. Is it possible that liberal causes have reached such a state that our furry friends have displaced our furless enemies as objects of political assault?

IRVING LOUIS HOROWITZ
New Brunswick, New Jersey

To the editors:

What qualifications, I wondered, does Richard Klein, a professor of French at Cornell, possess that he should write an article on America's "misplaced obsession" ("The Power of Pets," July 10)? None, it turns out. His article is exceedingly trite, having been resurrected routinely about every ten years ever since disposable income became a factor in the sermons of society's watchdogs. Klein, taking a dog-in-the-manger attitude, presents a hodgepodge of historical snippets and hysterical cautionaries.

I was edified only to learn that I am a cynic, having the highest, most unrealizable ideals. Imagine my dismay, then, to learn that this makes me also a subscriber to a Nazi philosophy that blurs distinctions between humans and animals and leads, Klein opines, to the "worst forms of biologist racism or naturalism."

Klein misses the whole point. His subjective argument is dependent on placement of emphasis, not logic. In addition to his speciousness, Klein grates with his cloying insistence on bad puns in his sometimes cute and cuddly, sometimes sober discourse.

I never anthropomorphized a dog, nor do most pet owners. Rather, I enrich my life by opening my mind to the possibilities of the consciousness of other animals. My dog's superior senses provided a continual learning experience for me, and the delight she took in little canine pleasures brought me joy. I just held her in my arms while the vet put her out of the misery she suffered with herniated disks. I loved her dearly, and I'll cry if I want to. Richard Klein can bite me.

JUDY KOHLER
Reno, Nevada

To the editors:

In "The Power of Pets," Richard Klein writes: "Cynicism, from *cunis*, the Greek word for dog, referred originally to post-Platonic philosophers, like Diogenes Laertes, who adopted a doglike attitude toward life."

First, the Greek word for dog is *kuon*.

Second, Klein seems to be thinking of Diogenes Laertius, author of *The Lives of Eminent Authors*.

Third, Diogenes Laertius was not a cynic. There was, however, a famous cynic named Diogenes, a contemporary of Plato's whose biography is recorded in Diogenes's *Lives*.

Three mistakes in one sentence—doggone!

JACOB HOWLAND
Tulsa, Oklahoma

To the editors:

Richard Klein, in his article about the American passion for pets, complains about the way we anthropomorphize animals and implies, incorrectly, that this a modern aberration. Human beings have anthropomorphized the world around them for millennia in an attempt to make sense of it. Animals were chosen as totems and kept as pets by hunter-gatherer societies as well as by modern technocrats (the Detroit Lions and Exxon's tiger). Animals were used by Aesop and the brothers Grimm in the same way that they are used by Disney and more recent authors of children's literature.

I fail to see what is wrong with giving love and affection to companion animals and even grieving their passing. It is true that some people love animals and regard other people with suspicion and even loathing. This is unfortunate, but perhaps they do so because the animals reciprocate their regard without question or judgment, while other people are far less trustworthy. Who is to blame because Hitler grew up to be an animal-loving and human-hating megalomaniac—Hitler, the animals or his fellow human beings? Hitler notwithstanding, recent research indicates the worse we treat animals the worse we treat our fellow human beings.

Finally, research indicates that a dog makes one appear more likable and trustworthy in the eyes of strangers. Many politicians have exploited this and have photos of themselves in the company of an appropriate dog. Cats do not do as well, and I would bet that Clinton could improve his standing among the public by several points simply by acquiring a German shepherd from the local shelter.

ANDREW N. ROWAN
North Grafton, Massachusetts

Upping the ante

To the editors:

If the purpose of foreign affairs columns is "confronting evil" and suggesting policy for political decisionmakers, I can understand Nader Mousavizadeh's frustration with Thomas Friedman ("Not Two Cents," July 10).

Friedman is alone (or at least lonely) in the press in his appreciation of the forces at work in the global economy (credit markets, individuals' thirst for economic advancement, etc.) that can and do have more of a bearing on the prosperity and peacefulness of a nation's people than the causes adopted and actions taken by political leaders, ethnic-identity campaigns and so forth. I don't find this so much "rampant economicism" as a recognition of the limits of centralized political power and a persistent, unblinking questioning of the purposes of violent conflict.

Perhaps not a point of view that has much relevance for powerful political leaders seeking foreign policy advice. But maybe one with much to say to citizens as to their expectations of themselves and their leaders.

TOM LUSSENHOP
Minneapolis, Minnesota

To the editors:

While your occasional debunking of celebrities in the scatological fashion of Lytton Strachey fails to enthuse me, I must admit that the piece by Nader Mousavizadeh on Thomas Friedman's foreign policy writings made me understand why this distinguished *Times* columnist has often left me flabbergasted even when he writes, as he does frequently, on international economic questions.

The moral insensitivity that is charged to Friedman, and is illustrated with his remarkable commentary on Bosnia and the Kurds, can be seen as scarring Friedman's views on trade policy as well. He has taken uncritically to the confrontational "geoeconomics" that provides a thin veneer of pseudo-Hobbesian intellectualism to Washington's current preoccupations driven by petty politics and puerile economics. It is particularly evident in the unceasing fulminations against Japan that explode like a burst of gunfire in his columns.

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Japan, in these columns, becomes a gigantic conspiracy practicing predatory exports and exclusionary imports: there is no nuance, no regard for the complexity of the question at hand, no doubt. Friedman's Japan is an ahistorical, unscholarly abstraction that must be confronted and its evil trade empire destroyed. One fails to see here a judicious probing, thoughtful, liberal temperament, mindful of crossing the line into, and fueling, morally indefensible paranoia and prejudice; the affinity with Pat Buchanan is much too plain.

Indeed, the story that he started a column with once, to rejoice how Japan, faced with a continually rising yen, has been coping with the heat without opening its "closed" markets but will finally have no option except to do so, reveals more than he intends. He recalls an experiment in his school where a frog is being boiled alive. The heat rises; the frog jumps but not enough to escape the confining glass; things get hotter, the frog leaps and leaps, lingering in the glass until the boiling water makes him finally jump to safety.

As I read this column, my thoughts turned, not to Japan or its trade, but to Friedman himself. What kind of school did this kid go to where they boiled frogs?

JAGDISH BHAGWATI
New York, New York

Puerile

To the editors:

TNR editors should take Nader Mousavizadeh's sermon on the peevish and self-congratulatory journalism of Thomas Friedman to heart, for it is blatantly reproduced in the editorial of July 10, "Forget Yeltsin." Your foot-stamping criticism of Russia and its benighted leader is complemented by the most awesomely puerile recommendations such as get rid of Yeltsin and wait for "genuine democratization, which will take time." And what happens in the meantime to a de facto headless nation with the second-largest nuclear arsenal, a nation you describe as on the verge of collapse? What happens to the vast underbelly of Russia, the Central Asiatic lands?

The truth is that Yeltsin has outlasted all predictions of his imminent demise. Name another world leader who would last a month at the top of the incredible mess that is the former Soviet Union. As for his appearance at the G-7 conference, a proper sense of proportion dictated that decision rather than hysterical reactions to Budyonnovsk. Your editors share Friedman's haughty attitude toward formerly great powers, and that is very shortsighted, indeed. Russia will rebound, and we should help it to do so without lectures and timetables regarding democratization.

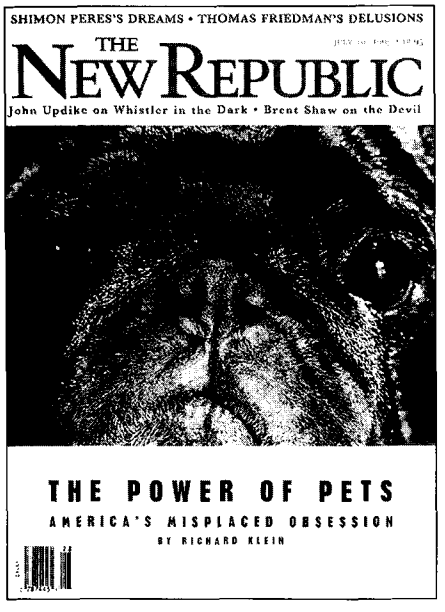
KEN WHELAN
San Francisco, California

Cut and run

To the editors:

I could not agree more with Matthew Miller's thesis in "Kinder Cuts" (July 10). Without question, Clinton, or anyone in the current White House, should be focusing on balancing the budget and practicing fiscal responsibility.

Of course, the reason Clinton was the '92 Democratic candidate instead of Paul Tsongas was because he knew better than to promise toil and blood.


SHIMON PERES'S DREAMS • THOMAS FRIEDMAN'S DELUSIONS
THE NEW REPUBLIC
John Updike on Whistler in the Dark • Brent Shaw on the Devil
THE POWER OF PETS
AMERICA'S MISPLACED OBSESSION
BY RICHARD KLEIN

Showing that sort of responsible leadership may get you the editorial praise of THE NEW REPUBLIC, but it doesn't win elections.

DOUG WEISKOPF
Cincinnati, Ohio

Climate control

To the editors:

I was glad to read skepticism of the skeptics' opposition to global climate change in Robert Wright's TRB column ("Chaos Theory," July 10). As the data mount, Wright's argument that doing nothing is fairly likely to bring a fairly bad outcome and somewhat likely to bring a terrible outcome becomes increasingly persuasive, if optimistic.

The data suggest that the policy of doing nothing is already generating fairly bad results on a local scale. It is likely to bring terrible results on a regional or global scale in the not-so-distant future. The real issues seem to be how quickly will the negative impacts of rapidly changing patterns in global climate spread and whether science is able to document them quickly and thoroughly enough to convince anyone (i.e., everyone) to do something.

MICHAEL DELAPA
Monterey, California

Parts of speech

To the editors:

In praising the Supreme Court's recent opinion upholding the right of the Boston St. Patrick's Day parade organizers to control the parade's message (Notebook, July 10), you remark how sad it was that it "took two years and nine Supreme Court justices to remind the birthplace of Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. about the meaning of free speech." I am afraid that you, too, need a reminder—not about the meaning of free speech, but about Holmes's free speech record. As a justice of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts, Holmes declared that because the state held title to pubic property it could "absolutely or conditionally ... forbid speaking in a highway or public park." Later, on the United States Supreme Court, Holmes wrote an opinion affirming a ten-year prison sentence imposed upon socialist presidential candidate Eugene Debs for a speech criticizing American involvement in World War I. Not until quite late in his career did Holmes become the eloquent defender of free speech for which he is now lionized.

JAMES WEINSTEIN
Phoenix, Arizona

Fair Harvard

To the editors:

I am responding to William Storrer's correspondence (July 10) that Gina Grant was denied Harvard matriculation because she "lied" on her admission form and not for murdering her mother, and for his gratuitous slur against Tufts University. I would offer this: get real! Grant was denied because her presence would upset the elitist atmosphere that exists in Cambridge. Harvard didn't want to confront the messy situation she presented. "Veritas" be damned! We Tufts alums were taught that, although at times doing the right thing may leave us feeling uncomfortable, we nonetheless must abide by governing principles of right and wrong, character and cowardice.

JOHN PETER SUAREZ
Cherry Hill, New Jersey

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TRB®

FROM WASHINGTON

Tangled web

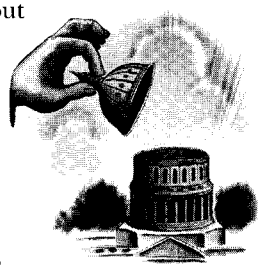
You might think your cable TV rates would skyrocket once they're deregulated by the telecommunications legislation now emerging from Congress. After all, unregulated monopolies have been known to suck all available blood from the hapless consumers left at their mercy. But Republicans swear this won't happen. The new law, rather, will expose cable companies to stiff, price-stifling competition—in particular from the Baby Bells, who will now be assured the right to pipe video into living rooms. That's the claim. But the House version of the legislation includes an interesting provision. It delays the full liberation of cable rates by fifteen months. Thus, the soonest consumers could feel the effects would be a few weeks after the first Tuesday in November, 1996. Hmmm.

Some backers of the telecom law admit that it may increase the average cable bill in the short run. A few even admit that cable companies in some areas will make a killing, reaping big "monopoly rents." But there is a rationale for this windfall: cable companies, we're told, will use it to build new infrastructure. The result will be the long-promised broad-bandwidth data superhighway. You'll be able to watch any opera any time, engage in "distance learning," tele-conference, tele-eat with in-laws on Thanksgiving and so on.

Does this sound familiar? Years ago, when Al Gore suggested vaguely that we "build" a data superhighway, some Republican free marketers scoffed at this zany liberal notion. Surely he wasn't suggesting that we take your tax dollars and use them to erect a vast futuristic contraption! (Actually, it's not clear that he was.) But now Republicans are suggesting, in effect, that we tax cable subscribers to help erect a vast futuristic contraption.

So have Republicans become zany liberals? Don't be silly. There are at least two differences between the Republican approach to building the data superhighway (hereafter: the dataway) and a liberal approach. First, if we *are* going to levy a dataway-construction tax, liberals should prefer a progressive tax, like the income tax. The Republican "tax" is a consumption tax and is thus regressive, taking a larger fraction of lower incomes. (Low-income people use cable heavily; it's a cheaper form of entertainment than, say, a regatta.)

The second difference between this dataway construction project and a liberal version runs deeper. Al Gore's vision, as outlined early in the Clinton administration, was of a "switched, interactive" network—a diffuse web connecting everyone to everyone else, not a tree-and-branch structure connecting everyone to cable central. The dataway was going to be like the Internet, except with broader bandwidth; you could send not only e-mail to relatives, but home videos. This setup was going to unleash vast creativity. People would transmit amateur documentaries, start political talk shows, craft new multimedia products. And make money! Thanks to plummeting distribution costs, catering even to obscure tastes would be profitable. America would become a world leader in inventing cool new info-phenomena. Along the dataway, a thousand flowers were going to bloom.



The new telecom legislation, in encouraging cable companies to build infrastructure, does not ensure the most fertile ground for flowers. Just ask yourself: Should Telecommunications Inc., or Time-Warner, really *want* a thousand flowers to bloom? It's true that this blooming might increase the use of the coaxial cables they own. But they also own what is known in the trade as "content"—HBO, a stake in MGM's film library, etc. Presumably they're ambivalent about a sudden profusion of competing content. So we can't rest assured that they will build a grass-roots dataway. Indeed, some cable companies have a demonstrated tendency to use extra cash to simply turn fifty-channel tree-and-branch structures into 250-channel tree-and-branch structures. Adding channels does, of course, let a few more flowers bloom. But the flowers tend to reek of Hollywood, rather than signal a new era of grass-roots creativity.

To be sure, the new legislation is leading some cable companies to think more creatively—about rejiggering their systems to provide the broad-bandwidth Internet access that copper phone lines can't provide. In principle, this could bring a grass-roots dataway. But, in practice, cable companies may be tempted to skew the access they provide: to steer consumers toward a part of the net that houses their content, to charge other content providers fat fees for steering consumers toward *them*, and so on. Life could thus become hard for mom-and-pop content providers.

But won't the newly liberated Baby Bells, in turning their copper phone lines into fiber-optic video pipelines, provide competing broad-bandwidth Internet access? Won't this force the cable companies to play it straight? The dirty little secret in telecom circles is: don't bet on it. Laying fiber into the home is quite pricey and is of uncertain value, given the head start in video enjoyed by cable companies. That helps explain why the Baby Bells have been so reluctant to use the "video dial-tone" provisions in current law.

In theory, we might try to salvage the grass-roots dataway vision by using some tool akin to "common carriage," the legal principle that now compels the Baby Bells to charge you the same phone rate they charge your neighbor. If applied to video, this would mean cable companies had to serve everyone on equal terms: no discrimination against a mom-and-pop outfit or anyone else. But the new telecom law not only imposes no such obligation on cable companies; it frees the Baby Bells from common-carriage rules when they provide video.

As of late 1993, Gore was affirming the basic idea behind common carriage, promising that "open access" would be a cornerstone of the administration's dataway policy. So what happened?

Washington. At about the time Gore spoke, his point man on telecom policy, Roy Neel, was becoming a lobbyist for the Baby Bells. Now his job is to hold monthly breakfasts for telecom journalists, where he sometimes rails against the idea of a common-carriage dataway. Gore himself seems distracted from the issue of overall network architecture by, for example, the politically easier question of cable TV rates. (The administration may veto telecom legislation over this issue.) Meanwhile, with the telecom industry pumping millions per year into Congress, Republican legislators have given the cable companies, Baby Bells and long-distance companies roughly everything they wanted, except in those awkward cases where they wanted conflicting things.

The resulting hodgepodge—which could pass in the House any day now and would then be fused with a Senate hodgepodge—is not a complete tragedy. Cable companies face some competition

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

AUGUST 14, 1995

THE RACE GAP

Last week saw some depressingly political twists on the affirmative action story. Perhaps the oddest was how the intent to abolish it is now the preserve of moderate Republicans. Governor Pete Wilson and Senator Robert Dole—both formerly sympathetic to the programs—are now to the "right" of Newt Gingrich and Bill Bennett, who both shrink at the "divisive" prospect of abolition. Having done little or nothing to focus on the problems of the predominantly black underclass (or did we miss that clause in the Contract with America?), and having sloughed off welfare reform to the states with insufficient funding, Gingrich now postures about the need to be "inclusive" and to delay abolition until other programs are in place to help black America.

In one sense the speaker is right. The abolition of affirmative action should indeed be linked with an attempt to rescue inner-city education and to tackle crime and welfare dependency if it is genuinely meant to cure racial inequality. But, if we wait for Gingrich to get around to this, affirmative action will be here forever—which, come to think of it, is probably what he has in mind. Far better for the Republicans to keep this issue bubbling than actually to address it. The only difference between Dole-Wilson and Gingrich-Bennett, in this respect, is that it's politically more useful for the first two to exploit the issue now, while they jockey for position in the GOP presidential race, and better for the last two to wait for 1996, when they themselves would likely choose to join it.

The president's own political calculations are even finer. Many have noted how his speech last week seemed to come from his heart. But even Clinton's heart is a thoroughly political organ. His prime objective right now is to avoid a Jackson candidacy, which, in the absence of a fourth or fifth candidate, could wreck his chances of re-election. He's also gambling that Americans' frustration with preferences will be muted by their squeamishness at the risk of an abrasive racial debate. This squeamishness, by liberals and conservatives alike, has led us for years to couch our dialogue about race in euphemisms and vague generalities. It has impeded a direct and effective response to racial problems.

If Bill Clinton's bow to his party's complacent left becomes a political hindrance in a few months, he does have an escape clause. His speech was accompanied by a Justice Department report, authored by Assistant Attorney General Walter Dellinger, that showed that most of the programs the president defended are almost certainly unconstitutional. With admirable clarity, the report argues that recent Supreme Court decisions rule out all but the most narrowly tailored affirmative action procedures:

> To the extent affirmative action is used to foster racial and ethnic diversity, the government must seek some further objective, beyond the achievement of diversity itself.... Is the program justified solely by reference to general societal discrimination, general assertions of discrimination in a particular sector or industry, or a statistical underrepresentation of minorities in a sector or industry? Without more, these are impermissible bases for affirmative action.

Racially earmarking federal jobs to make the government "look more like America" is, then, unconstitutional. More interestingly, the president knows this. So he waits until they're forcibly dismantled by the Court, and plays factional politics until they go. He must be relieved: he can appease his left-wing while knowing his right-wing will almost certainly win in the end.

The politicization of the affirmative action debate highlights our broader political vacuum: there is no party left that can uphold the race-neutral liberalism Democrats once believed in with a commitment to help the underprivileged. The only people who have grasped the need for race-neutral public policy are the very people who cannot be trusted to perform the other half of the bargain. Even if Dole or Wilson rises to the occasion, their revanchist right-wing—which veers between cynical why-botherism and actual racial prejudice—will surely hamper them. And the president, clearly, is a hapless prisoner of whatever factional force pushes the hardest. Meanwhile, our racial crisis deepens, abetted by the panacea of affirmative action on the left and the do-nothing cynicism of the right. Sooner or later, we'll have no choice but to do better. •

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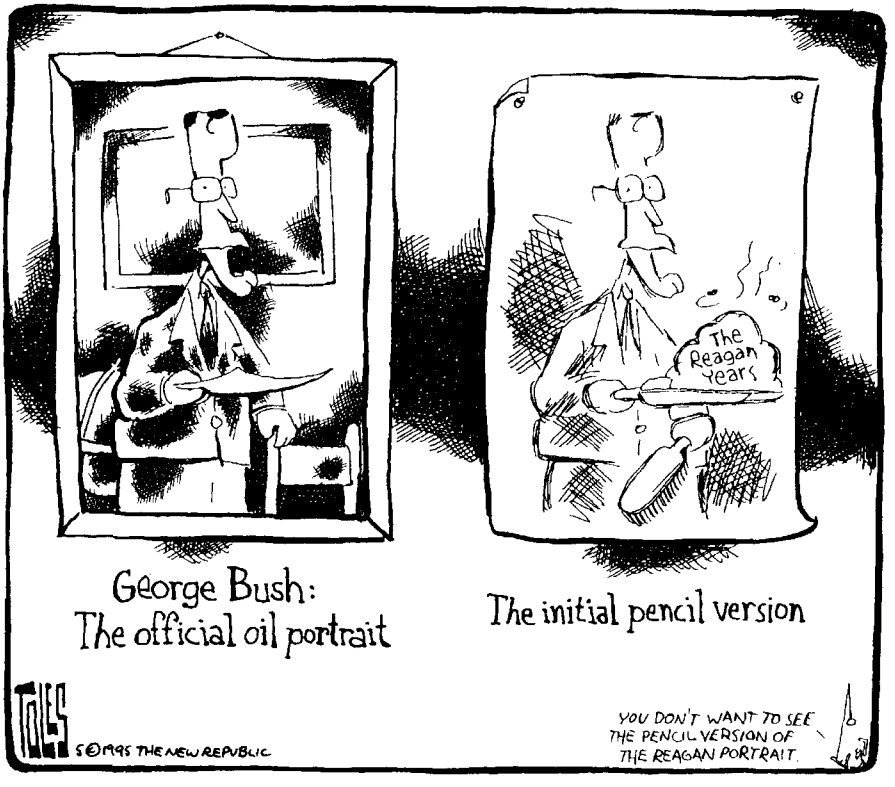
NOTEBOOK

SIC TRANSIT: Officials in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, announced that the city's yellow water is safe to drink, although it stains laundry.... Jim Harnsberger, who has been married five times, owes $18,000 in child support and has been accused of threatening an ex-wife and former girlfriend, is the leader of a San Diego, California, family values group.... Connecticut Judge Socrates Mihalakos has ruled that Nancy Sekor, a middle-school teacher fired for incompetence in 1993, must be reinstated because she was judged incompetent in only two of the three subjects she taught.... Hormel Foods Corp., makers of Spam, have filed suit against Jim Henson Productions, arguing that "Spa'am," the villain of the next Muppet movie, is "evil in porcine form."


George Bush:
The official oil portrait
The initial pencil version
The Reagan years
TOLES
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YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE THE PENCIL VERSION OF THE REAGAN PORTRAIT.

FARCE: Remember "the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce"? There are times and places when farce does not come after tragedy, but with it. In Bosnia, on July 24, for example. On that day three things happened. The U.N. sent its rapid reaction forces to Sarajevo, William Perry warned the Serbs of the consequences of an attack on Gorazde, and the Serbs advanced on ... Bihac. Surprise! There was something especially cynical about NATO's insistence that *this time* its threat was serious. Even as the threat was issued, NATO officials made a great spectacle of their quibbling about tactical definitions, and the British foreign secretary confessed that "no one wishes to use air power." (Perhaps he believed that Pale was out of earshot.) Then there was the "dual key" problem. The "dual key" was designed to prevent NATO military command from acting without the approval of the U.N. civilian command. And so it is no key at all; it is really the opposite of a key: it is a stronger and fancier lock. Last week Boutros Boutros-Ghali thwarted the new NATO seriousness by refusing to relinquish his veto power over military action, and American officials—excuse us, "scrambling American officials"—were not willing to unburden American policy of the inhibition that the secretary general personifies. And then there were the Russians. Andrei Kozyrev spoke loudly in defense of Russia's raping and throat-slitting allies. He said that the Serbs attacked Srebrenica in self-defense, since Bosnian troops had used it as a staging point for raids against the Serbs. Of course, the Russian foreign minister said nothing about the siege before the fall of Srebrenica or the atrocities after. Oh yes, and *Lingua Franca* reported last week that the Russian Writers' Union bestowed one of its highest honors, the Mikhail Sholokov Award, on Radovan Karadzic. The butcher is a poet! "A great chance / to abandon once / All that my times offer to me / And to throw a morning hand grenade / Loaded with a laugh / Of a lonesome man / With a dark character..."

HAVING A NICE WAR: The only decent tidings came from Capitol Hill, where the Senate seemed ready to approve the Dole-Lieberman measure to lift the arms embargo against the Bosnians unilaterally. The debate was memorable. It was a great relief finally to witness some strong emotion on behalf of the victims of genocide, though the strong feelings of those who want the United States to turn away will also not soon be forgotten. The American evasion of its moral and strategic responsibility was most ardently advocated by John Kerry. He called the lifting of the embargo "a policy that's an epitaph for Bosnia ... [that] basically says, 'We ignored you for a few years, then we lifted the arms embargo after we did you damage, and we wished you good luck. Have a nice war.' " And he told Ted Koppel that

> once you've pulled the humanitarian bloc out and it's happened because we initiated it, then when CNN and "Nightline" and others are covering the debacle that follows, when they're showing the refugees stampeding over each other, when they're showing people shooting each other in the streets, when there are more tales of rape, more tales of ethnic cleansing for all the world to witness, as a consequence of the implosion of the United Nations effort, we are going to be blamed for having precipitated that.

Senator, you're breaking our hearts. Open your eyes.

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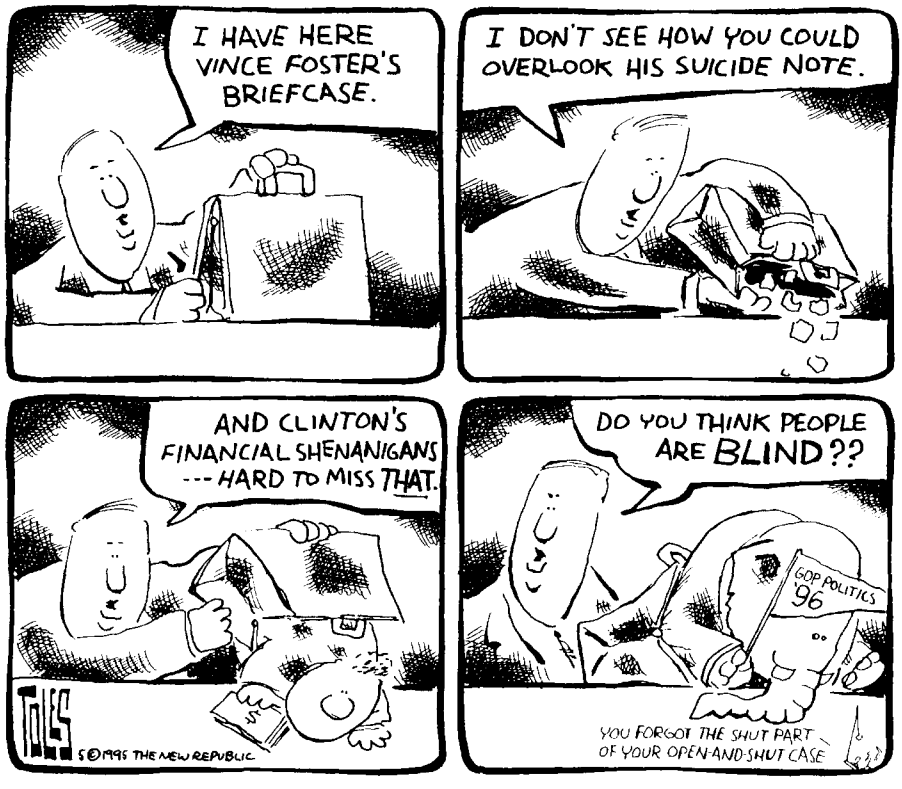
You have described what is taking place *now*. And is there really no more pressing consideration about ethnic cleansing than that we should have clean hands? Our hands are already dirty, senator. They are already stained by the passivity of officials such as yourself. But take heart. If you fail to block the Senate's effort to thwart the Bosnian doom, the president will block it. His veto is certain. And the Bosnians will have accomplished, from the depths of their wretchedness, what almost no group in America has accomplished. They will have made Bill Clinton take a stand.

WHITE MEN CAN JUMP: In the aftermath of the University of California vote, the defenders of affirmative action are standing up to give the most compelling reason for it they can find: they personally benefited from it. "I am a product of affirmative action," California Assemblyman Willie Brown told the regents (an admission that may have had unintended consequences). And four days after the vote, on "Meet the Press," Senator Bill Bradley argued for affirmative action on the grounds that he, a tall white Missourian, got into Princeton thanks to two preferences: a sports scholarship and geographic quotas. Bradley's defense of geographic quotas is particularly deplorable: they were created in the 1920s to preserve Anglo-American ethnic supremacy by reducing the number of East Coast Jews admitted to Ivy League schools. Geographic quotas still have the effect of favoring white Midwestern Christians like Bradley at the expense of higher-scoring students on the East and West Coasts—a category that includes many Jews and Asian Americans. Oh, well, maybe Asian Americans kept out by regional quotas can get into Princeton under the other preference Bradley defends. Let them try out for the basketball team.


I HAVE HERE VINCE FOSTER'S BRIEFCASE.
I DON'T SEE HOW YOU COULD OVERLOOK HIS SUICIDE NOTE.
AND CLINTON'S FINANCIAL SHENANIGANS --- HARD TO MISS THAT.
DO YOU THINK PEOPLE ARE BLIND??
GOP POLITICS '96
YOU FORGOT THE SHUT PART OF YOUR OPEN-AND-SHUT CASE
TOLES
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TERROR ABROAD: The world's terrorists will claim this week as their own. In Brussels, the NATO powers bowed to Serbian terrorism again and the Clinton administration assented to this in order to maintain the precarious ego of Boutros Boutros-Ghali and the fiction that the organization he represents is somehow a force for peace. Then, in Paris, where for years the government had propitiated Palestinian terrorists, some political psychopath, as yet unidentified, apparently took revenge on the Chirac presidency's new sternness toward two forms of state terrorism: the Nazis' and the Serbs'. In Ramat Gan, near Tel Aviv, twenty-two months after the White House handshake, and with Israel set to devolve more territory and more powers on the Palestinian Authority, a bus bomb exploded again with several dead and many injured. Yasir Arafat was said to have criticized this bombing, even though it is precisely such random bombings of innocents that propelled his career. The Rabin government will continue the peace talks, set on a course that may bring peace to the Palestinians but only routinize the danger of terror to the Israelis.

COLLECTIVISM: Ever wonder what the plural of campaign contributor is? A pride of donors? A flock of angels? Now we know, thanks to Terry McAuliffe, finance chairman of the Clinton-Gore re-election campaign, who intoned last week: "There's just a wealth of people out there who want to give to the president."

THIS JUST IN:

Brash World of Bogus Goods Thrives in L.A.

—*The Los Angeles Times*, July 5.

Audit discovers lawyers overpaid

—Salem, Oregon, *Statesman-Journal*, June 8.

(Thanks to Thomas Frick of Los Angeles, California and Jerry Gilbert of Salem, Oregon.)

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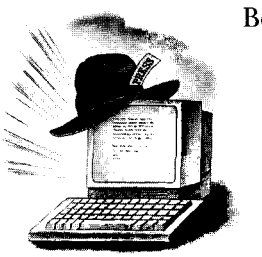
GLUG, GLUG

By Josh Young

A screenwriter friend phoned me a few weeks ago and asked if I wanted to hear the real story behind *Waterworld* from the film's producers, Lawrence and Charles Gordon. He was working on a project with the brothers, and he explained that Larry and Chuck were anxious to set the record straight about the well-publicized, chaotic production that had spiraled out of control. What self-respecting chronicler of the entertainment business could say no? *Waterworld*, a futuristic thriller that opens July 28 and stars Kevin Costner as a creature with fins and gills who must save the soggy planet from Dennis Hopper's army of marauding pirates, is the most expensive movie ever made. Reported cost: $175 to $200 million, or roughly five times that of the notorious catastrophe *Heaven's Gate*.

By the time *Waterworld* wrapped, there were more intriguing subplots in the shooting of the film than in the script. One of the floating sets, which was roughly the size of a village square and weighed some 1,000 tons, sank to the bottom of the Pacific Ocean. The budget, financed by Universal Pictures, began around $65 million and soared to nearly $200 million thanks to poor planning and the logistics of shooting on water. Director Kevin Reynolds quit when Costner, Reynolds's close friend, took over the editing behind his back.



It may not sound as worthy as tracking the Commerce Department scandal, but finding an entertainment story that hasn't been filtered through layers of publicists can be difficult—and that, in short, is why the entertainment press loves the *Waterworld* saga. Studios predictably guard troubled films from the media while shamelessly pushing any other film with the proper-sized holes to fit on a projector. Information supporting whatever cotton-candy myth a studio's production division has spun is made available in the most palatable form, through ever-charming movie stars who use the media to deliver the studio's message to the public before the financially decisive opening weekend. These movie stars, who earn upward of $10 million per film, are closely protected by a coterie of agents, managers and publicists. The publicists regularly handpick magazine writers for feature stories, and editors accede because they need a star on the cover in today's shrinking magazine market.

The prime aim for the studios, of course, is using the media to sell their movies, and they work very, very hard at it. Publicity equals free advertising; good publicity can be priceless. Most of the media gets its information about a film at a manufactured promotional opportunity known as a "press junket." Studios fly reporters, mostly freelancers for foreign publications or writers from smaller papers that can't pay the travel tab, from city to city and provide them with everything from rooms at the Four Seasons to chits redeemable for popcorn at the theater. Not surprisingly, the resulting stories are mostly sugarcoated.

At these press junkets, a herd of print and electronic journalists is treated to interviews with the film's stars. For print media, the star sits on a couch in a hotel suite with a dozen reporters semi-circled around and answers questions for a half hour. Then the talent is rotated. Television spots are done in a another suite.

Reporters from publications with larger circulations—and those who don't accept the freebies—are invited to do lunch with the star. The star usually wins over the reporter. As producer Michael Shamberg, Danny De Vito's partner in Jersey Films, says, "Any actor can be charming at lunch for two hours. I would be shocked if you've ever interviewed a star who wasn't nice and charming in person. Do you know any actors who don't want to be liked? That's their job."

Writers from magazines with long lead times and big circulation numbers, such as *Vanity Fair* and *GQ*, are typically invited to the set for a few days to absorb the actors' higher truths for their 10,000-word opuses. Because these interviews occur during filming, the studio is assured a magazine cover near opening day regardless of whether the film turns out to be a turkey.

And, of course, a reporter—like a Midwestern moviegoer—can be star-struck by, say, Sharon Stone. Several weeks ago, the blond actress best known as the vixen in the steamy blockbuster *Basic Instinct* spoke at the National Press Club in Washington. The sold-out, $25 per person event was taped by NPR and C-SPAN and later fed onto the Internet. In attendance were several print journalists and no fewer than ten television crews. Stone told them that four years ago she twice tested positive for cancer of the lymph nodes and that she had lumps in every area of her body. But with "a lot of positive thinking and a lot of holistic healing," Stone said, "I ended up testing negative for lymph cancer, but it took several months and those months changed my life and one of the changes during that time is that I stopped drinking coffee and when I stopped drinking coffee, ten days later I had no tumors in any of my lymph glands."

Somehow, the educated and otherwise skeptical audience accepted Stone's odd, heretofore unknown cure for cancer. Some media organizations reported her pronouncement verbatim. Only when a lone female wire-service reporter with her critical faculties intact tracked down Stone later that day did Stone explain that she hadn't really had cancer, just swollen lymph glands. Stone's publicist later confirmed this diagnosis and blamed the press for not checking out the original story.

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Within days, some skillful spin-control by Stone and her publicists had changed the tale from Stone misspeaking into a sloppy reporting job.

Ah, the gregarious and sly Hollywood publicists—the flacks, as most editors call them. In Washington, political handlers are forever spinning a story in favor of the pol they serve, but these spin doctors have nothing on Hollywood when it comes to shaping a story and controlling content. First, Hollywood publicists often request (and usually receive) veto power over which writer a publication assigns to profile a client. In an article in the July issue of *Premiere*, six influential Hollywood publicists admitted that they have asked for writer approval, which certainly helps explain why star profiles in major magazines are overwhelmingly positive. How does this work in practice? When a magazine recently assigned a profile on a PMK public relations client to freelance writer David Blum, PMK told the magazine to get another writer or forget the interview. Blum's transgression: less-than-fawning profiles of PMK clients Johnny Depp in *Esquire* and Julia Ormond in *The New York Times Magazine*. Some publicists also require reporters to sign interview contracts, remarkable documents in which a reporter promises not to meddle in certain areas or not to use any of the star's quotations in future stories.

When all else fails, though, a publicist can resort to a counterattack strategy, loosely adapted from the Hollywood rule book, Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*. This was the approach that Leslee Dart of PMK took in sending Hugh Grant out on the talk-show circuit to berate himself as a goat and a coward. Appearances on "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno" and "Larry King Live" helped propel Grant's mediocre, pre-parental angst film *Nine Months* to a healthy $12 million opening weekend, therefore keeping the smirking actor's asking price for his next film in the $5 million range. "This situation should be studied," oozed one studio publicist after Grant's coming out on "The Tonight Show." "Leslee Dart is brilliant. No one understands how to use the media like she does." Re-election campaigns, take note.

Costner tried to use the print media in similar fashion for pre-release damage control on *Waterworld*, giving interviews to *Premiere* and *Entertainment Weekly* in which he basically dumped all over his former friend and director Kevin Reynolds. Costner, whose three most recent films, *The War*, *A Perfect World* and *Wyatt Earp*, were box-office duds, explained in *Premiere* that picking Reynolds as director was "a huge, huge mistake in judging character."

Conspicuously absent for the most part from these *Waterworld* stories, as well as from the informative disaster-by-disaster story in *Vanity Fair*, were the Gordons. So when my screenwriter friend offered me an interview with them, I jumped at the chance for some unfiltered, non-vindictive information about *Waterworld*. It sounded logical that the movie's producers would want to tell their side of the story. After all, Larry Gordon, whose credits include such hits as *48 Hours* and *Field of Dreams* (co-produced by Chuck), has a reputation to protect against charges of profligacy.

Alas, it came down to more immediate matters of profit. My friend left a message saying that he had spoken to the producing duo, and they would have the publicist from Universal call me. I knew the interview was dead. As much as the brothers Gordon might want to justify all the money that was frittered away or consumed by the elements under their guidance, they also want the film to succeed. And, if the film bombs, then it's just as well for the Gordons that the Kevins are feuding. The old adage that there's no such thing as bad publicity just doesn't hold water in this world.

JOSH YOUNG writes about pop culture and entertainment for *The New York Times* and other publications.

BERKELEY POSTCARD

REGENTS' EXAM

By Peter Schrag

It was stunning how swiftly it was accomplished. On July 20, at the end of a single tumultuous day—a bomb threat, a last minute attempt by demonstrators to stop the proceedings—the University of California's board of regents, urged on by Governor Pete Wilson, the nominal president of the board, voted 14-10 to abolish all race and gender preferences in admissions to the nine-campus system. Of course, given Wilson's talent for divining and exploiting political wedge issues, his deft use of affirmative action to revive his sputtering presidential bid should hardly have been a surprise.

If ever there were a target of political opportunity, UC was it. At Berkeley, the system's flagship campus, the academic gap in admission scores between whites and Asians on the one hand and blacks and Hispanics on the other is huge: an average of 250 points (1300 vs. 1050) on the combined SAT. At the UC Irvine Medical School, the test scores of Vietnamese applicants who are rejected are higher, on average, than those of the blacks who are admitted. At Berkeley's law school, black applicants with college grades averaging between 2.75 and 3.5 have a one-in-five chance of being admitted; for whites with the same scores, the chances are less than one in twenty. At most UC campuses, as even retiring UC President Jack Peltason reluctantly seemed to acknowledge, race has been not just one "plus factor" beyond minimum eligibility standards in admitting applicants from favored minority groups (a practice allowed by the Supreme Court's landmark 1978 decision in *Regents of the University of California* v. *Bakke*); it had become the only factor. The university was now being forced to drop these policies in part because it

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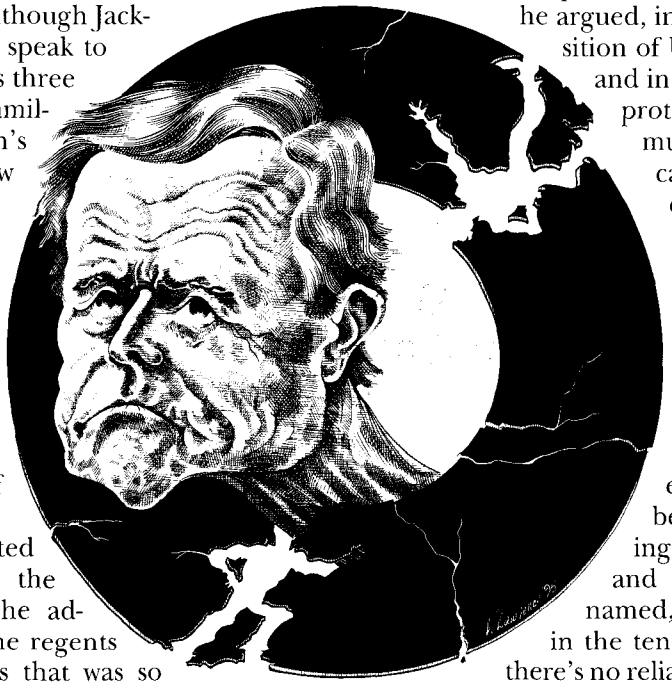
was violating the legal principle it had helped establish.

The path had been well cleared. A solid majority of UC's board of regents were loyal Republicans—many were large party contributors—appointed either by Wilson or his GOP predecessor, George Deukmejian. More help came courtesy of Jesse Jackson and a small band of San Francisco demonstrators—including aging radicals such as Mario Savio, once of the Free Speech Movement—who gave Wilson a political gift he couldn't have arranged on his own. A few days before the crucial meeting, Jackson declared he was prepared to go to jail to stop the regents; the statement not only guaranteed Wilson a bushel of free media attention but exposed the eroding moral case of the larger civil rights movement. After all, UC regent Ward Connerly, the earnest black businessman and longtime Wilson friend who was pushing the resolutions to end preferences, hardly fit the role of Bull Connor. Although Jackson, given unlimited time to speak to the regents (the usual limit is three minutes) pulled out all the familiar stops about the nation's racist past, he showed he knew nothing about UC admissions—certainly not that, in its community colleges and state universities, California, even without preferences, still has the most accessible and inclusive higher education system in the world. Jackson, said one regent, "blew any hope of compromise."



Wilson also got unexpected help from another quarter: the university administration. The administration had provided the regents with a report on admissions that was so internally contradictory and tendentious that four angry board members circulated a public letter to their colleagues rebuking their own administrators, including Peltason. They declared, in effect, that they no longer found UC's data credible. UC had argued that, if preferences were given by economic hardship instead of race, as Connerly had proposed, black and Hispanic enrollment (now a bit less than 17 percent of the total student population) would decline precipitously, while the percentage of Asians, now about 31 percent, would rise. If that occurred, said a UC administrator, Berkeley would become "90 percent Chinese and 10 percent white."

If, with a few exceptions, UC had only been admitting students who were academically qualified, as the administration claimed, why would abolishing race preferences result in excluding any large number of blacks or Hispanics? UC answered that, if blacks and Hispanics were not given preferences for admission to the system's competitive campuses (Berkeley and UCLA), they would go to some university outside the UC system. In effect it was saying this was not a matter of excluding any worthy student but of keeping up the diversity numbers against competing institutions. UC also argued that, if economic disadvantage were given more weight, "current levels of student financial aid and student services would not be sufficient to accommodate the increased need." In other words they appeared to be excluding poor Chinese students in favor of middle-class blacks with lower scores because the latter could pay the bills. The argument didn't persuade.

Still, given the paucity of reliable information about the likely effects of Connerly's resolutions, there was reason to postpone a decision and allow the regents another year to evaluate the alternatives—and give them a chance to select and install a new president. Regent Roy Brophy, a Sacramento builder and longtime political Wilson backer (and head of the presidential search committee), pleaded for more time; a decision now, he argued, in the face of the strong opposition of UC's chancellors and faculty, and in the face of the likely campus protests this fall, would make it much harder to get any good candidate to take the president's job.

One consideration allowed no delay: Wilson's political schedule. Particularly after Jackson announced his intention to make this a showdown—and after Bill Clinton reaffirmed his support for federal affirmative action the day before—there was no retreating. Wilson, according to Brophy and others who declined to be named, freely twisted regents' arms in the ten days before the vote. While there's no reliable information on how hard the twisting became, no one has ever accused Wilson of being pusillanimous when it comes to a political fight, even if winning the prize meant dragging a great university into the political arena after him.

The effects were plain enough. Of the fourteen votes that went with Wilson on the crucial resolution ending race preferences in admission (fifteen also voted to end race preferences in hiring), at least two had been expected to vote against him and two who had been listed as undecided voted with him. One, who had publicly announced his opposition to the resolutions, a former state assemblyman named Bill Bagley, now a political lobbyist in San Francisco, abstained. With the exception of Brophy, only two of the regents who hold gubernatorial appointments, one black, one Hispanic, voted against him. Six hours before the final vote, Wilson made clear that he knew he had the votes. This politician leaves nothing to chance.

PETER SCHRAG is editorial page editor of *The Sacramento Bee.*

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Mr. President:
ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

July 20, 1995

The Honorable Bill Clinton
President of The United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Like all Americans, the 380,000 constituent families of the Simon Wiesenthal Center are outraged by the scope of the human rights violations in Bosnia and frustrated by the civilized world's failure to take the necessary measures to stop the killings.

First, we want to go on record in endorsing the request made to you by Simon Wiesenthal this week: that the United States publicly name those individuals responsible for the policy of ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and state unequivocally that these individuals will be brought before the bar of justice, however long it takes. Failure to do this will make a mockery of the legacy set down 50 years ago at Nuremberg that such crimes must not go unpunished.

Secondly, **stopping ethnic cleansing must stand above domestic politics and international hypocrisy**. Mr. President, the time for action is now! The Simon Wiesenthal Center urges you to immediately develop with congressional leaders a bi-partisan strategy to put an end to this horrific human tragedy.

Mr. President, all eyes are on you: the eyes of the helpless men, women and children in Bosnia, the eyes of the survivors — yesterday's victims of man's inhumanity to man — and the eyes of the perpetrators who brazenly continue to debase the foundations of civilized conduct.

Rabbi Marvin Hier, Los Angeles
Seymour J. Abrams, Chicago
Rabbi Abraham Cooper, Los Angeles
Dr. Eric Garver, Bridgeport
Barbara Greenspun, Las Vegas
David Jaroslawicz, New York
Jeffrey Katzenberg, Los Angeles
Steve Levy, New York
Ira Lipman, Memphis
Dr. Gerald Margolis, Los Angeles
Peter and Leni May, New York
Rabbi Meyer H. May, Los Angeles
Nelson and Claudia Peltz, New York
Ethan and Monica Penner, New York
Abe and Irene Pollin, Washington D.C.
Sid Sheinberg, Los Angeles
Paul Singer, New York
Ed and Martha Snider, Philadelphia
Walter Yetnikoff, New York
Richard Zinman, New York

If you would like to see this message in other leading newspapers, please send your tax deductible contribution to:
The Simon Wiesenthal Center, 9760 West Pico Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90035. 310.553.9036

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A case study in political and military failure.

THE FALL OF SREBRENICA

By Charles Lane

ZAGREB

The barking of dogs filled the air around Srebrenica on the night of Tuesday, July 11, just hours after the United Nations-declared safe area fell to the Bosnian Serbs. To Warrant Officer Be Oosterveen of the Dutch unit assigned to protect the enclave, it was clear what the sound meant: Serb soldiers were using dogs to hunt down Muslim men who had fled to the surrounding hills. After daylight, he heard the sound of shooting coming from those same hills. "It was not fighting," he recalls. "It was shot by shot. There's a difference between fighting and executing. You can hear that." Soon, there was proof. A frightened refugee boy approached Oosterveen, gesturing toward the hills and drawing a line across his throat. The boy led Oosterveen and a fellow soldier to a group of nine men, Muslim civilians, face down in a row at the edge of a stream. Oosterveen's colleague snapped a couple of quick pictures of the bodies. Then the two soldiers, weaponless because Serb troops had disarmed them, hastened back to camp. "The Serbs were close," Oosterveen says. "It was dangerous."

So thorough was the Western humiliation in Srebrenica that a thirty-year veteran of a NATO army found himself reduced to furtively documenting war crimes that had occurred on the perimeter of his own base, crimes that he had been powerless to prevent. But the story is even worse: a review of the events leading to the fall of the enclave shows that it need not have fallen so easily, meaning that at least some of the horrors perpetrated against its former inhabitants were quite possibly preventable. There are many to blame, including Srebrenica's Bosnian army defenders, who failed to put up a serious fight. But most of the fault lies with the rubber-willed politicians of the West and the U.N.-dominated system they devised for purportedly protecting the safe area. That hybrid of peacekeeping and warfighting made it impossible for the Dutch to use all their military assets, including NATO air power, to full advantage against the Serbs. The result was that authorized representatives of the international community stood by as certainly dozens and probably hundreds of civilians were either murdered—some by Serb forces wearing stolen U.N. garb and driving stolen U.N. vehicles—or led away to face death in Serb custody. Srebrenica is a case study in how Western dithering at the highest levels translated into humiliation and murder on the ground.

The full story of this scandal begins in Spring 1992, when Serbian paramilitaries began the ethnic cleansing of the Drina valley. The area, directly abutting Serbia, was strategically vital to Greater Serbia; yet most of its population, inconveniently, was Muslim. The majority-Muslim town of Bratunac, on the Drina just nine miles north of Srebrenica, was occupied by the Serbs on May 10. According to eyewitness testimony reported by Misha Glenny in *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, several hundred of the town's Muslim men were murdered in two days; some 6,000 or 7,000 more Muslim civilians were crowded into the town's sports stadium and then expelled. Many of them wound up down the road in Srebrenica.

On a visit to Bratunac on May 11, 1993, one year after this pogrom, I found an eerie, half-empty town whose remaining population appeared to be entirely Serb. Most of the shops in the former Muslim quarter had been looted and their windows smashed. The mosque had been razed; goats grazed in the weed-choked Muslim cemetery. Locals told me that the mosque had been hit by a Muslim bomb.

The sacking of Bratunac set the stage for a fierce Muslim counterattack and the most serious documented atrocities committed by Muslim forces in Bosnia. Muslim guerrillas, including survivors of the Serb rampage of the spring, operated throughout the winter of 1992-93 from Srebrenica and its surroundings, using an abandoned mine as a fortress. They burned several Serb villages and killed hundreds of Serbs; most were soldiers, but many were civilians. In February 1994 Nasir Oric, the commander of the Bosnian army in Srebrenica, showed John Pomfret of *The Washington Post* a videotape that, Oric proudly explained, depicted a burned Serb village and a pile of headless Serb corpses slaughtered by Oric's men.

During this period, Serb forces refused to permit humanitarian relief convoys into refugee-swollen Srebrenica. They attempted to seize the town outright in April 1993. That offensive, including a Serb shelling attack which left thirty-six people dead in a Srebrenica school yard, eventually prompted the U.N. to declare Srebrenica a "safe area." The Serbs accepted, on the condition that the Muslim soldiers in the town relinquish their weapons to a company of Canadian U.N. troops;

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most of the Muslims did. For the next two years, Srebrenica's population, stretched to about 42,000 by the continuing influx of "ethnically cleansed" Muslims from elsewhere in the Drina valley, lived in ghetto-like misery but relative quiet. Supplies came first via NATO air drops, then from U.N. convoys and the black market.

Oric, who in his prewar incarnation as a Yugoslav police officer briefly served as one of Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's bodyguards, established himself in the enclave as yet another of Bosnia's Robin Hood-style warlords. Zipping around the minuscule territory in a shiny black Volkswagen, he organized a thriving trade in fuel and goods smuggled across Serbian territory with the help of Ukrainian U.N. peacekeepers in nearby Zepa. Oric also presided over the reinfiltration of Muslim guerrillas into the enclave—as well as their partial rearmament. This was, as the Serbs say, a violation of the safe area demilitarization agreement, though it must be added that the agreement itself had been negotiated at the point of a Serbian gun. General Ratko Mladic of the Bosnian Serb army seems to have finally gotten fed up with Oric and decided early this spring to get rid of the Srebrenica enclave once and for all.

But Mladic had to contend with the 400-odd soldiers of the Netherlands 13th Air Mobile Infantry Battalion, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Ton Karremans. The Dutch had replaced the Canadians in January, 1994; before the assault, though, they still only had about 60 percent of their full strength, because the Serbs had refused to allow the entire battalion to enter the enclave as previously agreed. The Serbs also exploited U.N. peacekeeping rules to cripple the Dutch military capability. According to a senior Western officer, the Dutch unit was equipped with TOW missiles capable of destroying Serb tanks. But, by the time the Serbs attacked the town, the TOWs were inoperable. Serb officers had confiscated vital TOW spare parts as the Dutch were bringing them into the enclave; U.N. procedures permitted the Serbs to do so. Nevertheless, the Dutch, with light weapons and armored personnel carriers, had succeeded in establishing observation posts around the enclave and did their best to monitor the cease-fire, to look after Srebrenica's civilians and to deter a Serb attack.

The Dutch were the on-the-scene embodiment of the will of the international community, and Mladic, contemptuous though he is of the West's threats, was careful not to succumb to overconfidence. His troops began to gather around the enclave in April. Colonel Karremans reported suspicious troop movements to U.N. headquarters in Zagreb, but no special steps were taken to counter them. On June 3, the Serbs launched a brief attack on a Dutch observation post, but this, too, was dealt with passively.

On July 6, according to Karremans's account, Mladic's troops began seizing the Dutch observation posts one by one—using carefully directed tank fire that landed just close enough to threaten the Dutch but not close enough to kill them. "That was done in a very neat way by the Serbs," Karremans recalled. "Like Pac-Man." As the Dutch abandoned their posts (following U.N. rules of engagement that permitted them to fight back only if their lives were directly threatened), the Serbs took some of them hostage. They stole the peacekeepers' weapons, body armor and vehicles and, in some instances, their fatigues, blue helmets and berets.

The U.N. Security Council resolution establishing the safe areas permitted the U.N. to use all means, including NATO air power, to protect the enclaves and the U.N. troops in them. That included both wide-ranging punitive air strikes and close air support, defined as a carefully targeted attack on a particular weapons system threatening U.N. troops. Close air support must be requested by a commander on the ground, approved by Bosnian theater commander Lieutenant General Rupert Smith of Britain in Sarajevo and then agreed to by U.N. special representative Yasushi Akashi and his top military man, Lieutenant General Bernard Janvier of France, in Zagreb. Then the request is communicated to NATO Admiral Leighton Smith of the United States, who is based in Italy, to be carried out.

If a large-scale air attack had come, it might have been enough to shore up the Dutch and the enclave itself and to rebuff the Bosnian Serb attack. But air power did not come in an effective and timely fashion. Karremans formally asked for close air support on the afternoon of Saturday, July 8. By this time, his observation posts were collapsing and about thirty Dutch soldiers had been taken hostage. But the request, according to a senior Western military source in Zagreb, was turned down by Smith and his staff in Sarajevo. "They felt the U.N. in Zagreb would see it as too early and not worth the risks," specifically the risk of further hostage-taking by the Serbs, the source says. This was a reasonable fear, given that the Serbs had responded to an air strike on their capital, Pale, in May by seizing 320 peacekeepers. Janvier, who had been delegated full authority over air power by Akashi (who was out of town), spent hours in elaborate consultations with his staff in Zagreb, General Smith in Sarajevo and Admiral Smith in Italy.

By Sunday evening, the bulk of Janvier's staff was recommending that the Dutch troops be given close air support. But he balked: European Union mediator Karl Bildt was in Belgrade trying to negotiate with Milosevic for the recognition of Bosnia, and Janvier feared that an air raid on Bosnian Serb troops would upset those talks. He argued, as one source present at the meeting puts it: "If Karremans can hold out without close air, let's try it." Instead of launching close air support, Janvier ordered Karremans to set up a blocking position just south of Srebrenica town. Karremans dispatched fifty soldiers armed with light anti-tank weapons—but not the more effective TOWs. He relayed Janvier's threat to Mladic: any attack on the blocking position will result in the use of NATO air power.

Sure enough, on Monday, July 10, Mladic's soldiers attacked—and the Dutch drove them back. This was perhaps the crucial moment in the entire test of wills. Suddenly Mladic was knocked back on his heels. Some of Jan-

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vier's staff advised him to seize the moment and make good on his threat of air attacks. We will never know if the one-two punch of Dutch ground resistance and NATO air power would have bought more time for Srebrenica and its civilians. Janvier, still eager to avoid upsetting the political balance, opted not to use the planes. He justified his decision, in part, the source told me, by pointing out that the Dutch unit had already driven back the Serbs.

To be fair, Janvier's decision was made on the basis of incomplete intelligence. U.N. peacekeeping rules require U.N. forces to operate in a neutral, "transparent" manner and, thus, forbid them from running clandestine intelligence networks. As far as Janvier knew, the Serb forces consisted solely of what Dutch troops had personally seen up to that point: a tank and about a company's worth of infantry. In fact, as the Dutch learned Tuesday morning, when Mladic poured reserves into the fight, the Serb force consisted of 1,500 men backed by tanks—a four-to-one numerical advantage over the Dutch defenders.

Mladic attacked remaining Dutch observation posts from all points around the enclave. One post retreated, another stopped the Serbs. Unaware of the machinations in Zagreb, bewildered Dutch soldiers looked to the sky and wondered what was keeping the NATO airplanes. Finally, at noon, Janvier decided he had no choice but to order close air support. At about two o'clock, a first sortie took out a pair of Serb tanks as they were menacing a Dutch unit.

But at that point, Mladic took to the radio and gave Karremans an ultimatum of his own: any more air strikes and his artillery would flatten both the Dutch compound and the civilian population of Srebrenica. He would also execute all Dutch hostages. Monitoring the situation in Holland, Dutch Defense Minister Joris Voorhoeve immediately called Akashi and demanded that the air strikes be called off. Akashi, back in Zagreb, complied—and the battle to save Srebrenica was effectively ended before it had truly been joined.

In the aftermath, Defense Minister Voorhoeve insisted that Mladic's threat to the Dutch hostages and to civilians had been paramount in his decision to, in effect, let the Serbs have the safe haven without further opposition. But he and other Dutch military officials also emphasized a second reason: the fact that the Bosnian army itself was mounting so little resistance. "At the moment fighting started, they all fled," said Dutch Lieutenant General Hans Couzy.

Where, indeed, were the 6,000 or so armed men of Srebrenica, who, together with a battle-ready Dutch group and NATO aircraft, could presumably have at least blunted a Serb force of 1,500 even if they were outgunned in artillery? Throughout the war, the Serbs have been notorious for their reluctance to risk casualties to their own personnel by seizing positions with infantry; their specialty is shelling civilians into submission. Besides, Nasir Oric had sworn "Srebrenica will never be Serb as long as I'm here."

But on the day Srebrenica fell, Oric was not in town. He was, it seems, fifty miles northwest in Tuzla, on unspecified business. Indeed, his whereabouts in the months leading up to the Serb attack are a bit of a mystery. The Dutch forces had noticed a sharp deterioration in Bosnian morale and discipline throughout the spring—a deterioration of which Mladic, whose own spying capability is unconstrained, surely was aware.

In any case, military cooperation between the Bosnian and Dutch defenders was effectively precluded by the absurd contradiction inherent in U.N. policy toward the safe area. On the one hand, U.N. member states had refused to supply sufficient ground troops to actually defend against a Serb attack and had agreed to rules that let the Serbs weaken the capability of those troops that were introduced. On the other hand, they were supposed to enforce the U.N. arms embargo and its formal, if ineffectual, commitment to maintaining the Srebrenica safe area's demilitarization. The implicit message to the Bosnians was: we *cannot* defend the safe area, but you *may* not defend it. According to Oosterveen, Dutch troops refused several requests from the Bosnians to fight on their behalf. Not surprisingly, this led to increased tensions between Dutch and Bosnian forces. In one incident, Couzy said, Bosnian soldiers threatened to kill Dutch troops if they ever abandoned their posts—a threat carried out on July 8, when the Bosnians killed one Dutch soldier as his unit retreated from an observation post it had just surrendered to the Serbs.

The Bosnian men were divided between a minority for whom Srebrenica was home and a vast majority for whom defending Srebrenica would mean fighting for an unwanted refugee camp. Weak and hungry after months of Serbian siege, poorly armed, pressured by the final Serb push and without Oric around to whip them into shape, the Bosnians fell to fighting among themselves. Dutch troops witnessed two firefights between factions of the army that wanted to stay and protect the town and factions that wanted to flee. The Bosnians succeeded in mounting only a single major firefight against the Serbs before thousands of them began fleeing with their weapons and ammunition along the dangerous route through Serb-controlled territory to government lines near Tuzla.

What, then, has become of the roughly 42,000 people who once lived in the now-liquidated Srebrenica safe area? About 75 percent of them have made it to safety in Tuzla, according to the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR). The other 25 percent appear to fall into two categories. The first consists of 5,200 men (this number comes from the Bosnian Serbs' own Pale Radio) who were either captured as they escaped from Srebrenica with the remnants of the Bosnian Army or, in a minority of cases, remained behind in Srebrenica and were then separated from their families by the Serbs. These people have been confined by Serb forces in Bratunac. The second group consists of the remaining 5,000 or so, a figure that may include some stragglers who will turn up in Tuzla over the next few days and even a handful who may have escaped to Zepa or Gorazde. But the few reliable accounts from outside

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observers that have emerged so far suggest that many, many of these people are dead.

Once their brief struggle with the Serb army was over, the Dutch troops and about 15,000 refugees fell back to the Dutch compound at Potocari at the north end of the enclave. When the Serbs brought in vehicles to take people to Tuzla, the Dutch tried to negotiate for at least one Dutch soldier to ride on every truck or bus, but the request was refused. When they attempted to escort the refugee buses, the Serbs stole fourteen of their jeeps and several armored personnel carriers. As a result, the Dutch could only mount four or five stationary observation posts along the entire fifty-kilometer route the refugees were traveling.

Even with their monitoring capability systematically curtailed by the Serbs, the Dutch alone *saw* about twenty people murdered by Mladic's men. In addition to Oosterveen's account, two other soldiers report witnessing atrocities while confined by the Serbs to the Dutch compound. In one case, a Muslim man was taken away to a house, put up against a wall and shot by Serb troops. In another, a Dutch officer, having earlier seen men taken away from the compound for interrogation, saw the bodies of nine dead Muslims lying in a row, shot in the back.

The UNHCR, after interviewing refugees in Tuzla, has also documented that Muslims, both soldiers and civilians, were ambushed and shelled by the Serbs as they fled Srebrenica, leading to unconfirmed reports of hundreds of bodies lying scattered along the road to Tuzla. The UNHCR has confirmed cases in which a total of ninety-nine people were murdered outright, including twenty to thirty women and children killed by Serb soldiers who, wearing the blue helmets and driving the white jeeps they stole from surrendering Dutch troops, lured the refugees out of hiding to their deaths. Raymond Bonner and Stephen Kinzer of *The New York Times* spoke with more than 100 refugees in Tuzla and have documented cases in which a total of sixty Muslims were murdered. Kinzer's informants recounted how, before dawn on Wednesday, Serbs dressed as U.N. soldiers took people away from the Potocari compound, and the next day the bodies of nine dead boys were found—seven with their throats cut and two hanging from a tree. Robert Block of *The Independent* has seen videotape taken in Srebrenica on July 13 by the Belgrade independent station Studio B; the tape shows the bodies of about twenty-five young Muslim men who have been lined up against a wall and executed.

And what about the 5,200 Muslim men from Srebrenica confined in Bratunac? There, the sports stadium is once again being pressed into service as a detention center for the ethnically cleansed. The Serbs have systematically refused access to Bratunac, despite appeals from UNHCR, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the chief of staff of UNPROFOR. In every case, the Serbs have promised access and then withdrawn the offer. No journalists have been allowed into the town.

Yet the reports that have so far trickled out of Bratunac, if they can be confirmed, suggest that most of these men have met an awful fate. Through Western diplomatic sources, I learned that UNHCR in Tuzla has received the first account from a Muslim man who escaped from Bratunac. The 35-year-old man told the relief agency that he had fled Srebrenica with a group of 100 or so fellow Muslims before the town was occupied by the Serbs. But their group was captured and herded into several tiny abandoned houses outside the enclave. During the night Serbs removed men in groups of four and executed them; the man saw the bodies.

The survivors were then taken to the stadium in Bratunac, where they were held with their hands bound behind their backs and forced to look only at the ground. Mladic himself appeared and harangued the group, telling them that this is what they got for putting their faith in President Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia and trying to break away from Yugoslavia. He promised them they would be reunited with their families if they cooperated. Upon Mladic's departure, trucks arrived and took the men to a field, where they were made to lie down. Serb soldiers opened fire on the men with machine guns. The witness, however, was only wounded and managed to escape with another Muslim by hiding in a ditch. They watched as Serbs used earth movers to cover the dead bodies.

Though it cannot be independently confirmed, both the UNHCR aide who recorded it and the U.S. Embassy in Zagreb regard this story as credible. Rope burns around the man's wrists and a minor head wound seem to support his account. So does additional information gathered by Block of *The Independent*, one of the few Western reporters covering the crisis from Belgrade. He has seen additional video footage, taken by independent Serbian TV, which shows hundreds of Muslim men standing on a football field in Bratunac with their hands tied behind their backs. He has interviewed *Serb* witnesses, recently returned from Bratunac, who say that these men were on their way to the slaughter. The witnesses told Block of as many as 4,000 captured Muslim men murdered by Serb troops. One woman told Block that her brother-in-law, a soldier, counted 1,600 killed on Monday, July 17, alone. Other Serbs told Block that the Serbs were using trucks to transport corpses and an earth mover to bury them in mass graves.

It is vital that the truth behind these frightening reports be established. So far, however, there has been no demand from the United Nations Security Council that the Serbs grant outside relief agencies access to Bratunac. Meanwhile, the assessment of U.N. officials and Western governments is that Srebrenica was militarily indefensible—that there was no way to prevent the enclave, hemmed in by Serb-held high ground, from falling. This is about half true. Srebrenica was militarily indefensible—but only because the U.N. military deterrent operated under ambiguous and unwieldy rules designed less to protect Bosnians than to avoid Western casualties and obscure the accountability of Western governments. It would be more accurate to say that Srebrenica fell not because it was militarily indefensible but because it was politically indefensible. Which is also a pretty fair description of the West's policy toward Bosnia. •

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THE OUT-OF-CONTROL PRESIDENCY

By Michael Lind

I.

The president is shrinking. The institution of the presidency, magnified by half a century of world war and cold war, is rapidly diminishing in terms of both power and respect. The eclipse of Bill Clinton's White House by Newt Gingrich's Republican Congress foreshadows what promises to be the new pattern. Meanwhile, Congress has become bloated and arrogant, swelling the ranks of its own staff while encroaching on the constitutional prerogatives of the White House. Congressional supremacy would be a disaster, particularly in foreign affairs. We cannot have 535 commanders in chief.

This tale of the decline of the presidency and the rise of Congress is the emerging conventional wisdom in Washington. It is familiar, widely believed—and wrong. In fact, the relative power of Bill Clinton and Newt Gingrich says more about the political abilities of those individual men during a passing moment in national life than about the relative legitimacy and effectiveness of the modern presidency and Congress. Congress actually continues to lose the long-term battle for legitimacy with the presidency, while the imperial presidency, thought to have perished during Watergate, is alive and well, having been quietly rehabilitated by Carter, Reagan and Bush.

And Clinton? The weakness of the Clinton administration is real. But that weakness is the result not of long-term trends but of a peculiar conjunction of politics and personality. Politically, a Democratic Party reduced to minority status and split into warring factions is facing a new Republican congressional majority intent, fleetingly, on electing a united Republican government in 1996. Personally, a president with no strong convictions confronts a speaker of the House who is a zealot.

When these patterns of politics and personality inevitably change, it will become clear that the presidency is still on top. Newt Gingrich, especially, does not represent traditional congressional power. The authority of the major speakers of the past was based on their control of their parties and their mastery of the House as an institution. Republican Joseph "Czar" Cannon, speaker during the 1900s, and Democrat Sam Rayburn, speaker during the 1940s and '50s, could take for granted enduring, parallel party and committee power structures in the House. Gingrich, by contrast, has spent his congressional career in the fluid environment of the post-Watergate House. He is a speaker like none before. In the 1970s, congressional reformers weakened the principle of seniority that had made possible the reign of powerful, often Southern, committee chairmen for most of the century. During the same period, the parties experienced a general decay: boss-dominated state and local party machines gave way to today's ideological factions, interest groups and media machines.

In this kaleidoscopic swirl, a strong speaker cannot rely on an established order; he has to improvise his own. Gingrich has done so, borrowing the techniques not of historic speakers of the House but of contemporary presidents. Gingrich resembles a president, for example, in that his formal party organization is but one instrument of his power. The others are his former personal patronage machine (GOPAC) that funds other members of Congress, his own corporate-funded think tank (the Progress and Freedom Foundation), extra-governmental conservative pressure groups and, not least, the media industries he manipulates so well. To the extent that Gingrich has predecessors in Congress, they are entrepreneurial types who have set up their own personally based organizations, such as the Hollywood liberal network of Henry Waxman and Howard Berman and Jesse Helms's ideological-conservative organization in North Carolina.

Gingrich has also adopted the sound-bite techniques of modern presidents and co-opted the presidential style in the 1994 congressional campaign, using the Contract with America in the manner of a presidential platform and, after victory, claiming a "mandate" from the people. (The mandate theory is implausible enough when presidents invoke it—only nineteen presidents have been elected with more than 50 percent of the vote. It is utterly absurd when applied to Congress, since a congressional majority can result from a shift of a few seats, in a few regions, and may say little or nothing about the national mood.)

That the speaker has been able to jury-rig a personal power base by borrowing the techniques of the plebiscitary presidency and maverick congressional ideologues testifies to the institutional weaknesses, not the

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strengths, of Congress. Indeed, the rise of Gingrich is a sign of the fall of Congress. Even in the unlikely event that Gingrich is followed by other Bonapartist speakers, the prominence of the speaker will likely prove to be temporary. A tribune-speaker like Gingrich would be no match for a tribune-president like Reagan. And Gingrich has benefited from the absence of a consensus Republican presidential candidate waiting in the wings who could serve as a focus for partisan loyalty in the run-up to 1996. (Gingrich's trips to New Hampshire show, if not an intent to enter the race, a justified fear of being upstaged by a presidential candidate as the spokesman for the GOP.)

The election of a Republican president, more than anything else, would show how illusory the apparent resurgence of Congress is. Republican or Democrat, the next president will be handed the Nixonian imperial presidency, with most of its powers intact and with a few new prerogatives added.

In foreign policy, the next president would discover that, like every president since Truman, he can wage war at will, without consulting Congress. Though he might consent to a congressional vote as a matter of public relations (as Bush did before the Gulf war), he is more likely to invoke his supposed "inherent" authority as commander-in-chief. If necessary, his aides will concoct legalistic rationalizations, citing dangers to U.S. citizens (Grenada, Panama), authorization by the United Nations (Somalia, Haiti), NATO treaty obligations (Bosnia) or anti-terrorism (Libya). Whether a liberal or a conservative, the next president will dismiss the War Powers Resolution as unconstitutional.

Nor is de facto presidential supremacy in foreign affairs limited to war-making, the next president will discover. Bush and Clinton will have bequeathed an important technique for ramming economic treaties through Congress with little debate: fast-track legislation, which limits the time allowed for debate and forbids amendments. The Senate, which the Founders wanted to have weigh treaty commitments deliberately, was granted a mere twenty hours to consider the treaty that committed the United States to the jurisdiction of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Perhaps the next president can insist that it be limited even further—to, say, half an hour or fifteen minutes.

In the domestic arena, the next president will find even greater enhancements of his prerogatives. Thanks to Jimmy Carter, who reformed the Senior Executive Service to give the White House more control over career bureaucrats, and Ronald Reagan, who politicized the upper levels of the executive branch to an unprecedented degree, the next president will find it easy to stack government with his spoilsmen or reward partisan bureaucrats. And he can thank George Bush for a technique that enhances presidential prerogative even further—signing laws while announcing he will not obey them.

Bush engaged in the greatest institutional power grab of any president since Nixon. In 1991 Bush, delivering a commencement address at Princeton, said: "[O]n many occasions during my presidency, I have stated that statutory provisions that violate the Constitution have no binding legal force." As Charles Tiefer points out in the *Semi-Sovereign Presidency*, Bush used "signing statements"—statements accompanying his signing of a bill, during which he announced he would not enforce this or that provision—to exercise an unconstitutional line-item veto (White House counsel C. Boyden Gray concocted the idea). In one such instance, when Congress amended the Clean Air Act in 1990 to permit lawsuits by citizen groups against companies that had violated the act, Bush used a signing statement to declare, on supposed "constitutional grounds," that the executive branch would continue to act as though such citizen lawsuits were prohibited—nullifying the intent of Congress. Ironically, the "take care" clause of the Constitution was intended to compel the president to enforce laws he disapproved of (often, Colonial governors had refused to enforce parts of legislation passed by Colonial legislatures). As Tiefer points out, Bush was asserting a sovereign power to ignore statutes that had been denied the English king in the Seven Bishops case of 1688.

Yet another new instrument of arbitrary presidential power is the "czar." The institution of presidential commissars with vague, sweeping charges that overlap with or supersede the powers of department heads is utterly alien to the American constitutional tradition. Most famous is the celebrated position of "drug czar," which William Bennett held under Bush, and Lee Brown now occupies, which arrogates duties that were previously handled perfectly adequately by agencies of Justice and other departments. Similarly, Vice President Dan Quayle acted as a "czar" as the head of Bush's Council on Competitiveness, designed to circumvent Cabinet heads and Congress in regulatory matters.

The White House staff that has ballooned since World War II seems close to becoming an extra-constitutional "fourth branch" of government. For obvious reasons, presidents have preferred to govern through their staffers, most of whom need not be confirmed by the Senate and many of whom are young and pliant, rather than deal with the heads of Cabinet departments and independent agencies, experienced people who are less likely to be mere tools of the president's will. Nor is it any accident that the major presidential scandals of the past generation—Watergate and Iran-contra—have involved attempts by shadowy and scheming courtiers of law-breaking presidents to circumvent or suborn the older, established executive departments. Every time the high-handed actions of White House courtiers drag a president into scandal, Congress, the press and the public denounce the courtiers—Nixon's plumbers, Ollie North—or the president and then, under a new president, sigh with relief: the system worked. That future presidents will almost certainly be tempted to use their White House staffers as Nixon and Reagan did is ignored.

The imperial presidency, then, is intact, merely waiting to be powered up and taken out of the hangar. If

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today's Congress has its way, the presidency will become even more imperial. Having captured Congress after half a century, the Republicans are hastening to give away the powers of the branch they control.

Some of these powers are formal, such as the line-item veto. States whose governors have the line-item veto don't balance their budgets any better than states without it. A line-item veto simply shifts the power to protect pork from a legislature to an executive. Giving the president the line-item veto would not balance the budget; it would merely permit the president to zero out the bounties of his enemies while keeping bounties for his allies. It would also wreck the constitutional design, which intended the branch closest to the people to have the last word on spending the people's money.

Other reforms backed by Republicans in Congress would weaken their institution indirectly. Term limits would reduce the expertise of representatives and senators—and boost their reliance on executive-branch experts, as well as on K Street lobbyists and think-tank flacks. Abolishing such independent congressional fact-finding agencies as the Office of Technology Assessment would hardly make a dent in the deficit but would make it easier for Congress to be hoodwinked by the executive branch it is supposed to oversee. A balanced budget amendment would shift the final arena of budgetary policy from the Capitol to federal courts, civil servants or White House staffers.

Why did the Republicans campaign so hard to win control of an institution whose powers they want to delegate to the White House? Most Republican members of Congress see themselves as members of their party first and members of Congress incidentally (as do most of their Democratic colleagues). The separation of powers was based on the assumption that, though there might be small factions in the different branches, there would not be permanent, large-scale parties intent on capturing all three branches of government simultaneously. Such simultaneous capture, of course, is the goal of the modern parties, each of which is organized primarily around electing presidents. The congressional Republicans are counting on a resumption of Republican presidential hegemony after what they hope will prove to be the interregnum of the Clinton years. Once a Republican is sworn in as president, his followers on Capitol Hill will rubber-stamp initiatives emanating from the White House. (That, at least, is the plan; as the troubles of FDR and LBJ show, the control of both branches by the same party does not mean even a strong president gets his way.)

II.

In 1960, in his celebrated essay "The Two Majorities in American Politics," conservative political theorist Willmoore Kendall explained how "one and the same electorate maintains in Washington, year after year, a president devoted to high principles and enlightenment, and a Congress which gives short shrift to both." Kendall argued that Congress, far from being the undemocratic tool of special interests decried in his day by liberal presidentialists (and decried by conservative presidentialists in ours), was democratic in an older sense: in the sense of representative democracy, rather than plebiscitary democracy. In a congressional democracy, the citizens of local communities choose their mostly uninstructed delegates, who then work together to achieve "the deliberate sense of the community," which has little to do with the abstract slogans of a national party platform or the vague preferences that polls indicate. "We must learn," Kendall wrote, "... that the issue is not whether the American system is or is not 'democratic,' but which of two competing conceptions of 'democracy'—that which equates it with government by the 'deliberate sense' of the people, acting through their elected representatives, and that which equates it with direct majority rule and equality—should prevail." Kendall noted: "One of the two majorities, the presidential, has ... been engrafted onto our political system; it was not intended by the Framers, not even present to their minds as something to be 'frustrated' and have 'barriers' put in its way."

James Madison, in a seldom-noted passage in Federalist No. 63, notes that American democracy differs from ancient republicanism not in replacing direct democracy with representative democracy but in the absence, from the American constitutional scheme, of politicians who could claim to represent the American people as a whole, in the manner of the Spartan Ephori and the Roman tribunes. There are no officers, Madison writes, "elected by the whole body of the people, and considered as the representatives of the people, almost in their plenipotentiary capacity.... The true distinction between these and the American governments lies in the total exclusion of the people in their collective capacity, from any share in the latter, and not in the total exclusion of the representatives of the people from the administration of the former." More pithily: the president does not "represent" the people as a whole. No officer and no branch "represents" the people as a whole. If one did, all other branches would seem parochial and illegitimate by comparison.

Madison and other Founders did not conceive of the president as a "representative" with a popular constituency at all. The president was to be a nonpartisan chief magistrate. The Founders designed the Electoral College with the expectation that presidents would frequently be chosen by the House, voting by states, from lists of candidates nominated by special state electors. The idea of the chief executive as chief representative is French, not American. As Louis Napoleon observed, his uncle Napoleon I "earnestly claimed the title of first Representative of the People, a title which seemed about to be given exclusively to members of the Legislative Body."

Andrew Jackson was the first president to claim, like the two Napoleons, to be a tribune of the masses: "The president is the direct representative of the American people." His attempt to act as a democratic monarch produced a backlash against such claims until the twen-

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tieth century. Lincoln justified his sweeping war powers using legal arguments, not the claim that he was the sole legitimate representative of the nation; indeed, this former Whig opponent of "King Andrew" Jackson was hesitant about suggesting legislation to Congress, for fear of arousing suspicions of executive supremacy. "My political education," he declared, "strongly inclines me against a very free use of any of these means [recommending legislation and using the veto], by the Executive, to control the legislation of the country. As a rule, I think it better that Congress should originate, as well as perfect its measures, without external bias."

The modern conception of the president as an all-powerful tribune of the people comes from Woodrow Wilson. Wilson preferred the British parliamentary system to the American system of separated powers: "It is, therefore, manifestly a radical defect in our federal system that it parcels out power and confuses responsibility as it does. The main purpose of the Convention of 1787 seems to have been to accomplish this grievous mistake." Wilson argued for a different, Rousseauian conception of democracy, in which the president is the nation personified: "The nation as a whole has chosen him, and is conscious that it has no other political spokesman." Wilson was the first president since Washington to address Congress in person. He argued that the American constitutional tradition should never obstruct an activist president: "If he rightly interpret the national thought and boldly insist upon it, he is irresistible; and the country never feels the zest of action so much as when its president is of such insight and caliber. Its instinct is for unified action, and it craves a single leader."

The Great Leader is to lead not only the United States but the world: "Our president must always, henceforth, be one of the great powers of the world, whether he act wisely or not." Not the United States, but the presidency itself, is to be a great power! Wilson called for the president to ignore the prerogatives of the House and the Senate in foreign policy and to present the legislature with treaties as faits accomplis. "He need disclose no step of negotiation until it is complete." This strategy backfired when Wilson tried to impose the League of Nations treaty on the Senate, but later presidents have used it effectively. Bush's military buildup in the Gulf more or less forced Congress to ratify his planned war against Iraq, while the Clinton administration followed its Republican predecessors in ramming through GATT and NAFTA by means of fast-track legislation.

The plebiscitary theory of the presidency, the theory that the president, like Napoleon I, is First Representative of the Nation, is shared by all presidents today, Republican or Democratic. Though most presidents are elected with a plurality, not a majority—meaning most voters wanted someone else—every president today claims a "mandate" from the "majority" of "the people," considered as an undifferentiated mass with one General Will. The nomination of today's presidential candidates by primaries, rather than by congressional caucuses (the first system) or brokered party conventions (the system from the 1830s to the 1960s), has reinforced the illusion that the president represents the popular will, unmediated by either government structures or party organizations. The plebiscitary president is free to run against Washington, and even against political parties, in the manner of Ross Perot.

Running against Washington means running against Congress and "the bureaucracy," which are treated as villains in a morality play. The virtuous heroes are the president, and (for conservatives) state governments and an idealized free market. Presidentialists build up the legitimacy of the presidency by grossly exaggerating the faults of Congress and the parts of the executive branch that the White House does not directly control, such as the civil service and the independent agencies.

Consider the myth that the budgets and staffs of Congress and federal agencies have been escalating out of control. The money spent on the entire legislative branch is minuscule compared to that which goes to the executive. As James Glassman has pointed out, "You can eliminate all of Congress ... just get rid of the whole darn thing, you'd save exactly as much as you would save if you cut the defense budget by less than 1 percent." What's more, during the 1980s, appropriations for Congress actually fell, in real terms. U.S. representatives are paid much less than their counterparts in many other democracies, such as Japan, and their salaries compare unfavorably with those of professionals and corporate executives, many of whom have less onerous responsibilities. Congressional staff, though it has grown along with government in general, actually declined in the 1980s, while the number of employees in the executive and judicial branches expanded. As for turnover in Congress, the median length of terms for members of the House has been the same—four—from 1957 to the present. A twelve-year term limit for House members would hardly increase the present rate of turnover at all.

Why, then, do so many Americans believe Congress is a bloated, unresponsive, out-of-control institution? The American people have been misled by the propaganda of Republican members of Congress, who riddled the institution of Congress with bullet-holes in their bitter attack on the Democratic congressional majority. Voters have been misled, as well, by Democratic candidates, who profit in running against Congress and have no incentive to denounce the excesses of the office they hope to occupy.

Nor has the other half of the hated "Washington establishment," the federal bureaucracy, been growing out of control. Most Americans would be surprised to learn that in terms of manpower—around 2 million—the federal government has hardly grown at all since World War II. State bureaucracies have grown faster, local bureaucracies even faster still. Federal funds, to be sure, have paid for much of the expansion of state and local bureaucracies, but conservatives have been concentrating their attacks not on federal funds,

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but on federal employees.

But, unlike Congress and the federal civil service, one federal institution does resemble the caricature of an ever-expanding, arrogant, corrupt bureaucracy. Since World War II, the White House staff and the Executive Office of the President have metastasized. Dwight Eisenhower made do with twenty-nine key assistants as his White House staff in 1960; Bush needed eighty-one in 1992. The Executive Office of the President, created in 1939, has grown to include thousands of bureaucrats functioning in a presidential court, a miniature executive branch superimposed on the traditional departmental executive envisioned by the Constitution.

Meanwhile, the number of presidential appointees and senior executives has ballooned an astonishing 430 percent between 1960 and 1992, from 451 to 2,393. Most of this growth has not been in jobs for the hated career civil servants, but in positions for upper-middle-class political activists who donated money to, or worked in, presidential campaigns, or roomed with somebody in college, or whatever.

Presidents have consistently sought to expand the number of these political appointees. Mostly from elite law, lobbying, business, banking or academic backgrounds, these courtiers have ever more elaborate titles: principal deputy assistant secretary, assistant associate office director. As the titles grow, the average tenure shrinks (down to eighteen months from three years during the Johnson years). The in-and-outers, once in, can't wait to get out and cash in their fancy titles for higher lobbyist fees or an endowed professorship of government. If conservatives are serious about cutting back government, why not abolish most of the post-'60s presidential branch? Where is the outcry against the expansion of the presidential bureaucracy? Why is a congressional barbershop a greater enormity than four White House staffers devoted to dealing with flowers?

Part of the answer may be that most politically active people in Washington long to get one of these mostly useless but impressive-sounding jobs. A stint as an assistant deputy secretary or associate division director can raise the fees of a lawyer or lobbyist in the private market or increase the prestige of a professor who returns to campus. By contrast, lawyers, lobbyists and professors do not salivate at the thought of jobs as congressional staffers. Some of Washington's elite journalists, too, rotate in—or have family members or friends connected to—jobs in the executive branch. While the presidency grows out of control, politicians and pundits bemoan the illusory expansion of Congress but never take aim at the White House.

Ideologues of all persuasions have an interest in promoting presidential prerogative. Why battle over years to build a congressional majority, when you can persuade a president to enact your favored reform—gays in the military or gays out of the military—with a stroke of a pen? This accounts for the spitting fury with which op-ed pundits, think tankers and spin doctors pounce on any president who does not use "the power of his office" to enact their pet projects by ukase, preferably in the next few days or weeks.

Our press also helps the presidentialists of right and left by its obsessive focus on the person of the president at the expense of other executive branch officials, to say nothing of members of Congress and the judiciary. It makes for an easier story, of course, but laziness is no excuse for distorted coverage. Would the country crumble into anarchy if the major networks ignored the president for a week and followed the speaker, or the Senate majority leader, or the chief justice of the Supreme Court? Newspaper editors are just as bad. Several times, when I have written op-eds concerning government policy, I have been told by an editor, "You need to conclude by saying what the president should do."

Robert Nisbet has it right: "It is nearly instinctual in the political clerisy ... to portray the president as the elected representative of the entire people ... with congressmen portrayed as like mayors and city councilmen, mere representatives of wards, sections and districts." When appeals to plebiscitary legitimacy are insufficient, presidentialists can turn to the "court party" of legal and constitutional scholars, who are always ready with a defense of this or that supposed presidential prerogative. Judge Robert Bork, for example, has argued "that the office of the president of the United States has been significantly weakened in recent years and that Congress is largely, but not entirely, responsible." If one were comparing Reagan, Bush or Clinton to FDR at the height of his power, this might seem plausible. In a 200-year perspective it is absurd.

It is equally wrong to imagine cycles of presidential and congressional supremacy. As Theodore Lowi has pointed out, there have been only two eras: from 1789-1932, the U.S. was a congressional republic; after FDR, a presidential regime has been superimposed upon the former structure. In the remote era of the congressional republic, a president like Benjamin Harrison could promise, as he did in his 1841 inaugural address, that he would: *(a)* refuse to run for a second term and support a constitutional amendment limiting presidents to a single term, *(b)* refuse to use the veto, except, in the manner of Washington and Madison, to send back laws he thought unconstitutional, and *(c)* seek to persuade Congress to remove the Treasury secretary from control by presidents, beginning with himself. All of this, in reaction to the "virtual monarchy" that Harrison and other Whigs perceived in the administration of Andrew Jackson, who never dreamed of wielding the power used routinely by even a modest contemporary president such as Bush.

III.

That the views of a Harrison or a Madison seem so bizarre to us shows how hard it is to make the case for Congress today. Still, the case must be made. Presidential democracy is not democracy. In theory a single politician could be answerable to a constituency of hundreds of millions—but only in theory. In practice, the more presidential the U.S. government becomes, the less responsive it is to most

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Americans. Stunts like Jimmy Carter's "Phone the President" notwithstanding, any president will necessarily be remote from most citizens and accessible chiefly to concentric tiers of CEOs, big-money contributors, big-labor leaders, network anchors and movie stars. Any reader who doubts this should try to get appointments with both his or her representative and the president.

Under the Constitution of 1787, representative democracy in the United States means congressional democracy. Restoring congressional democracy must begin with discrediting in the public mind the plebiscitary theory of democracy. Americans must conclude that democracy does not mean voting for this or that elective monarch every four years and then leaving government to the monarch's courtiers. Democracy means continuous negotiation among powerful and relatively autonomous legislators who represent diverse interests in society.

This battle on the level of theory should be accompanied by a campaign at the level of symbolism. Congress, as an institution, is slighted by our public iconography. "We celebrate Presidents' Day," Thomas Langston notes in his new book about the presidency, *With Reverence and Contempt.* "Why not celebrate Speakers' Day? How about a Speakers' Memorial in Washington, D.C., ... [or] proposing that famous speakers of the House, or senators, also ennoble our currency[?]" The royalism symbolized by pharaonic presidential libraries should be combated by a law requiring that all presidential papers hereafter be deposited permanently in a single, modest presidential library in Washington.

Changes in government organization would need to accompany changes in perceptions of congressional legitimacy. An electoral reform such as proportional representation for the House might actually strengthen the separation of powers; it would encourage a multiparty system, but the same multiparty coalition would not likely hold the House, Senate and White House at once. In a multiparty system, the president might also be forced to appoint coalition Cabinets, as in parliamentary regimes. He would have less influence over a Cabinet secretary of another party than over some servile functionary from his own.

As for the executive branch, the slow seeping of authority from Cabinet secretaries to courtiers needs to be halted and reversed. Congress could drastically cut the White House staff—if representatives aren't intimidated by the divinity that hedges our elected king. The depths of the reverence surrounding the presidential court became clear on Thursday, June 25, when a House Appropriations subcommittee released a plan to abolish the Council of Economic Advisers. "Democrats," *The New York Times* reported, "said they were startled at the lack of respect for a separate and equal branch of government displayed by the gesture, and even the subcommittee chairman, [Republican] Representative Jim Ross Lightfoot of Iowa, said he recognized that they could be accused of 'micromanagement' and lack of proper respect for the office of the president." It is as though the British parliament had threatened to cancel the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace. The irony is particularly delicious since the Council of Economic Advisers was imposed on the presidency as part of the Employment Act of 1946 by conservatives in Congress hoping to check a free-spending White House.

The evolution of the council is typical of the process by which every augmentation of the executive branch in the interest of "efficiency" soon serves to enhance the power and prestige of the presidency. An even better example is the Office of Management and Budget, which was created after World War I as an independent agency (the Bureau of the Budget), drifted under presidential control during the administration of FDR and under Reagan became one of the White House's chief instruments of partisan control of executive agencies. Like a black hole, the presidency grows by absorbing ever more power and light.

Unlike a black hole, however, the presidency can be shrunk. Congress can not only scale back the White House to bring it in line with the staffs of prime ministers, but it can also make the heads of executive departments more independent of the president. The Founders expected department heads to carry out their duties more or less on their own (the Constitution gives the president the modest power to request reports in writing from department heads). The idea that department heads should be mere creatures of particular presidents is a modern misconception. Their duty is to use their own judgment to implement the laws passed by Congress, not to promote an imaginary "mandate" given the president by 40 or 45 percent of the voters. The Constitution permits Congress to vest the appointment of "inferior officers" in the heads of departments. Why not give it a try? It would strengthen their ties to their department head—and make it more likely that they would hang up when a White House staffer phoned to intervene, for the short-run political benefit of his boss, in the department's operations.

Reducing the president from a Latin American-style caudillo to something like a nineteenth- or eighteenth-century U.S. chief magistrate can be done, then, without revising the Constitution, merely by passing a few laws. It is hard to see how else the U.S. can avoid the completion of its slow evolution from a congressional republic into a full-fledged presidential state. The real trend in the world at the end of the twentieth century, it can be argued, is not so much from "dictatorship" to "democracy" as from unelected dictatorship to elective dictatorship—from Gorbachev to Yeltsin. The executive rulers have to face election, but rule by decree still tends to supplant rule by laws passed by representative legislatures. It could happen here—as the Founding Fathers feared it would. Ben Franklin, among others, predicted, "The Executive will always be increasing here, as elsewhere, till it ends in a monarchy." The new Republican majority in Congress should ponder that warning, as it sets about the further dismantling of the popular branch of government. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Careering Along

Faber and Faber recently published *Projections 4*, the latest issue of their annual about film, written only by people active in making films. (No. 4 was edited by John Boorman, Tom Luddy, David Thomson and Walter Donohue. 328 pp., $14.95.) As is usual by now, many rewarding pieces. The one that especially took me was edited by Owen Moverman. He interviewed separately most of the principal people involved in making the exquisite *Vanya on 42nd Street*, then he braided the interviews into one, tracing themes that run through them.

All the interviewees speak interestingly, sometimes very movingly, about the making of the film. Prominent among them is Julianne Moore, the Yelena. She says that, when André Gregory, the theater director, approached her, she was broke. But:

> I thought I could always go to Hollywood, but the chance to work on *Uncle Vanya*, let alone the chance to work with this company of people, and with this director, wouldn't come up ever again.... I mean, I can wait on tables. But *Uncle Vanya* won't happen again.

Now Moore is in two new films. These aren't her first: she has appeared in several, including Altman's *Short Cuts*, some of them made during the four years or so that the Vanya company rehearsed and performed intermittently in New York. But the two latest films had a special aspect for me because of that interview.

This is not an exercise in irony, a lament for Moore's golden Hollywood slide. One of her new pictures, **Safe** (Sony Pictures Classics), written and directed by Todd Haynes, is an account of a Los Angeles housewife succumbing slowly and mysteriously to "environmental illness"—poisoning by the air, etc. Haynes's directing is clumsy, almost as if the whole film were a clinical case in point, but Moore plays the woman acutely and, in fact, courageously, since for long stretches she has to occupy the screen with mere numbness and apathy.

The other is **Nine Months** (20th Century-Fox), which is adapted from a French film never released here—a romantic farce about a San Francisco child psychiatrist who hates children and his long-time live-in girlfriend (Moore), who wants them. We can hear the sawing and hammering as the plot is knocked together, but over the din, Moore is amusing. I was glad to see her for the first time in farce, which she handles pretty well, though the role is essentially the same one that many young women, hundreds of them, have been handed through the decades. Those young women usually could not act. Moore most certainly can, but here she only has to be happy, sad, mad and bustling as the hero's actions and reactions require.

Moore is beautiful, in a unique sculptural way. She has talent. She has brains. If she keeps on in films, which would be good for films, I hope she has, minimally, at least as much luck in her scripts as Meryl Streep has had.

Hugh Grant is the star of *Nine Months*, and he is depressing. He is good-looking, has charm, and some ability, but he has been hired, apparently, to make embarrassed faces and noises. He did this to some degree in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, which made his name, and in a filmic jam tart with a long title that includes the word "Englishman." In the first of these, at least, his grimacing and stuttering were part of a performance: in *Nine Months* they are isolated and expanded. These are the already trite tricks for which he has been imported. Plus, of course, sex appeal.

Chris Columbus, who directed and who adapted the French screenplay, apparently thought the script needed some punching up. Columbus had directed *Mrs. Doubtfire*, so he brought in the star of that picture, Robin Williams, to do some bits as a Russian obstetrician lately arrived in the United States. Williams injects some spurts of energy and some misuse of English. (He says to a pregnant woman: "Now I must examine your volvo.") His shtick paves the way for a climactic scene in a delivery room that goes past farce into silliness.

A lot of tyro directors these days are doing films about the difficulties of making independent productions. By far the best—and the funniest—of the recent crop is **Living in Oblivion** (Sony Pictures Classics). The writer-director Tom DiCillo was the cinematographer of Jarmusch's *Stranger Than Paradise*, which I admired, and directed *Johnny Suede*, which I didn't see. DiCillo already has a plentiful store of experience to draw on,

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Bandit Queen. *Factually based. A modern Indian woman, after years of abuse, sexual and otherwise, heads a Robin Hood band. After a prison term, she enters Indian politics. Sensational in several senses. (Reviewed 7/10/95)* **Jeffrey.** *A comedy—yes, comedy—about AIDS. A gay New York actor, frightened by the threat of the disease, shuns sex, or tries to. Wittily written, directed and, for the most part, played. (8/7/95)* **My Life and Times with Antonin Artaud.** *His last two years as seen by a young poet. Sami Frey is haunting as Artaud, Gérard Mordillat directs like a surrealist poet. (8/7/95)* **Sister My Sister.** *Joely Richardson and Jodhi May harrow us as two sisters who suddenly commit savage murders. (Based on the same facts as Genet's* The Maids.*) Nancy Meckler's directing is perfect. (7/17/95)*—**SK**

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hilarious incidents and accidents in the making of a low-budget feature.

In his new film, though, I couldn't quite follow his color scheme. I thought at the beginning that the "film," the one they're making, was being shot in black and white, the film-making itself in color, but this isn't consistent. And there is a series of mishaps, mechanical and personal, that are not entirely surprising. But even when anticipated, like trouble with a fog machine, they're funny when they happen. Also, there are episodes with the director's loony mother and with an articulate dwarf that are really original, really risible.

Eye-popping Steve Buscemi plays the director-author with just enough inauthority. Catherine Keener, the leading lady, gives us a look at the underside of film acting. Dermot Mulroney is fiercely comic as the macho cinematographer who gets his come-downance from his girlfriend, the director's assistant. But the central performance, though not in the biggest part, is by James Le Gros as the interior film's male star.

It's common gossip that the character is based on Brad Pitt, who played Johnny Suede. Le Gros, husky, with long blond hair parted down the middle, is strong on sex vibes and the mystique of psyching-up. The off-screen resemblance to Pitt I can't comment on; the on-screen Pitt is not too dissimilar.

The press kit for **Kids** (Excalibur) says: "Director Larry Clark confronts the reality of adolescent sexuality in American society (where 48 percent of teenagers have had sexual intercourse by the tenth grade and roughly half have had unprotected sex by the age of 19)." Source: the Centers for Disease Control and ABC's "Nightline." The picture's purpose is to dramatize those statistics.

Clark does it vividly, with exceptional ability to liberate his teenage cast. The screenplay is credited to Harmony Korine, who recently was one of these kids, but the feel is improvisational. This is not a documentary, but the teenage actors make us feel that they would be doing and saying these things even if the camera weren't there. These particular teenagers are mostly Hispanic and black from the (not quite) Upper West Side of Manhattan, but presumably their behavior patterns prevail in many groups and localities throughout the country. The language is consistently blue (though no bluer than in DiCillo's film). The sex-play and sex, the pot-smoking, the hanging-out, the skateboarding and the partying are virtually continuous. It's a day in summer, so they're not cutting school. The form is free-flow from one social occasion to another.

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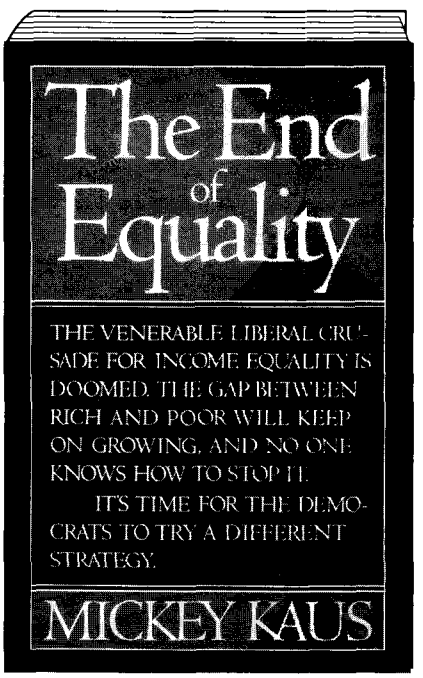
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If the film has a center, it's Telly, the 17-year-old boy who begins the film by deflowering a virgin and who closes the film, and the day, by deflowering another—using more or less the same line of talk. In between, one of his conquests, Jennie, who has slept with no one but Telly, learns that she is HIV-positive, something that Telly doesn't know about himself. Telly's friend Casper then has sex with Jennie when she is zonked out. So that makes a total of five who either have or may have the virus.

But when it's all over, it's the statistics that we remember. The film, though adroitly made, is less memorable. •

Robert Brustein on Theater

The Smashing of the Bell

Two tiny federal agencies, the pitifully underfunded National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, are facing imminent extinction from mutinous Republican legislators, toadying to a rampaging Christian right. On July 13, the eve of Bastille Day, modern Jacobins in the House of Representatives took an irretrievable step. They agreed to a freshmen-sponsored proposal to the Interior Appropriations bill that would make 40 percent cuts in the 1996 budgets and decapitate the endowments entirely within two years. Meetings between the House and the Senate might prolong the agony of these agencies a little longer, but, for all intents and purposes, the NEA and the NEH have been guillotined. Next on the block are the NEA- and NEH-sponsored achievements of the past thirty years. It is the end of a remarkable experiment, which for a time helped persuade the world that, in spite of itself and against all odds, our government might finally play a role in developing our civilization.

I no longer have the heart to argue the importance of government subsidy, however minimal, to the creative and intellectual life of this nation. After twenty-five years of disputation, my pen has run dry and my throat has gone hoarse. After auspicious beginnings and encouraging annual increases, we have watched the appropriations for the endowments freeze, then diminish and now disappear altogether. The mindless budget-cutting of this Republican Congress is making some of us ashamed to be Americans.

Both Chairman Sheldon Hackney of the NEH and Chairwoman Jane Alexander of the NEA are gracious and able personalities who have worked tirelessly to save their agencies from the axe. But after meeting with each of them on a recent visit to Washington, after talking to their staffs and after reading their brochures, I began to understand better why their efforts to save the endowments were ultimately doomed to failure. The fact is that for the last two decades neither of these agencies has been allowed to establish or articulate a clear-cut policy or definition. Periodic hostages to congressional authorization and re-appropriation, they were always prey to external pressures, whether from the left, in the form of multicultural panels with political agendas, or from the right, in the form of anticultural puritans with moral agendas, or simply from congressional demands to distribute funds on the basis of geography rather than merit.

Besotted with populist values, few in Congress or the nation were equipped to appreciate the intrinsic importance of the arts and the humanities. In recognition of this melancholy fact, the public testimony and published materials of endowment chairpeople were always likely to emphasize, not quality, excellence, imagination and inspiration as criteria for funding, but rather such peripheral benefits as access, dissemination, bookbinding, inner-city outreach, arts education and the impact of the arts and humanities on the local economy (hotels, parking lots and restaurants). "The NEH is about democracy," wrote Hackney in an eloquent pamphlet called *Lasting Values in a Disposable World*, "about equal access and participation by the many, not the few." One understands the necessity for such populist rhetoric, and wide distribution is, of course, the goal of every artist and thinker. But not every great creative or critical work has immediate mass appeal.

The National Institutes of Health and National Institute of Science do not have to apologize for distributing grants to scientists and researchers. Most lay people understand how they eventually benefit from basic research. But, forced to demonstrate their value to "the many, not the few," the NEH and the NEA invariably have had to trot out wide-audience programs (like television documentaries) to justify their existence. In the rare cases when individual advances in art or intellect are mentioned, they are invariably encrypted within large invocations to the human spirit and the human heritage.

This kind of elevated verbal reinforcement is the lingua franca of cultural administrators. (I am often forced to use it myself.) But if the importance of the arts and humanities is still not clear to this nation thirty years after the creation of the endowments, then the struggle to preserve them is obviously hopeless. Who has been listening all this time? Who has been reading? Who has been thinking? In his office in the Old Post Office Building, the mild-mannered Hackney has two warning signs: "Thou Shalt Not Whine" and "No Snivelling." I believe he has every right now to whine, snivel, scream and stamp his foot. Certainly, delivering courteous speeches about the human spirit and the human heritage to people who believe the only function of government is to cut spending and reduce taxes is about as useful as reading Hegel to orangutans.

Anyway, it is clear that most legislators don't want to hear about the value of the endowments. They just want to hear about their scandals. The thousands of NEA grants to symphonies, museums, opera, dance and theater companies, are of far less interest to them than a few hundred dollars transferred from a sheltering organization to a controversial performance artist, while the accomplishments of the NEH in sponsoring scholarship, criticism and even TV documentaries fade before the single contested award for the establishment of history standards in the schools (an effort ironically initiated by the NEH's former chairwoman and fiercest critic, Lynn Cheney).

In the face of such persistent misrepresentation of their function, one wonders how Congress kept these agencies alive for so long. But a major difference between the past and now is that John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson and even Richard Nixon were willing to speak out fervently on behalf of the arts and humanities, while Bill Clinton uses the word "arts" as infrequently as Ronald Reagan used the word "AIDS." (It is true that Hillary Clinton did make a speech about the importance of the arts to the human spirit and to the local economy that found its way onto the op-ed page of the *Times*.) Will Clinton veto the Internal Appropriations bill? Certainly not for the sake of the NEH or

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the NEA. The same spineless lack of principle that weakens the president's foreign policy decisions hobbles (or wobbles) his domestic actions. His every act is measured by the armies of voters it might conscript, and the arts and humanities have even fewer divisions than the pope.

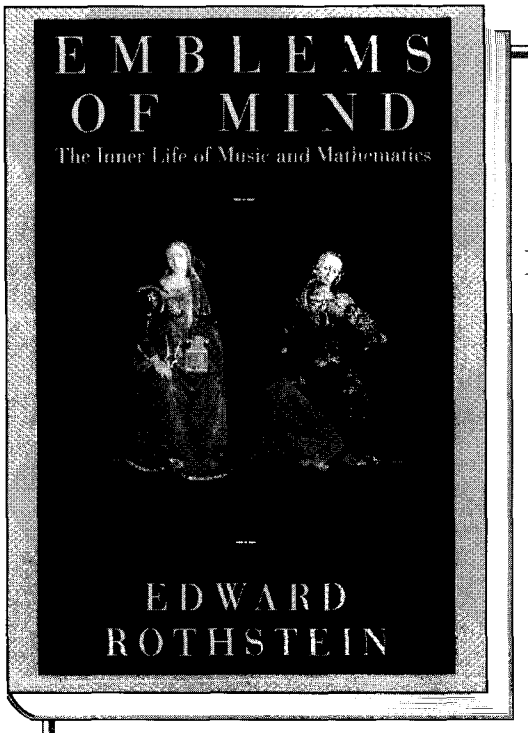
Into this leadership vacuum have swarmed the budget-cutting servants of the religious right who, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, began to replace internal enemies like the communists and their fellow travelers with artists and intellectuals. In the heated fantasies of conservatives, prefaces to arts catalogs replaced *Das Kapital* as demonized texts, and avant-garde artists such as Robert Mapplethorpe, Andres Serrano and Karen Finley assumed the subversive roles once assigned to Alger Hiss and the Rosenbergs.

Considering the hatred attracted by these individual artists, it might just have been possible to preserve the endowments had they agreed to shut off funding to anything considered even mildly avant-garde or controversial. This desperate strategem was actually attempted under former NEA Chairman John Frohnmayer, with his notorious anti-obscenity pledge, until the courts ruled it unconstitutional. But, aside from being an improper use of prior restraint, such an action would have effectively undermined a central purpose of the endowments, which was not only to encourage established institutions and traditional scholarship but to help nudge forward the boundaries of art and thought. It is easy enough to celebrate such custodial NEH functions as editing and publishing the papers of Franklin, Washington, Jefferson and Martin Luther King. But where is the critical reinterpretation that sheds new light on traditional texts? In the same way, "cutting-edge" artists may be identified with the Antichrist in the minds of some legislators, but without them the arts would have no future.

It is the natural consequence of experimentation in the arts that it lead to occasional failure, even to occasional scandal, though this occurred far less frequently than reported. At the NEA fewer than forty out of thousands of grants—forty!—proved even remotely controversial. Naturally, these were the ones that Donald Wildmon of the American Family Association and his letter-writing ilk seized upon to inflame the minds of right-wing members of Congress. But who has bothered to compare the magnitude of endowment sins with those of less stigmatized government agencies? Is anyone (other than a few libertarians and militia groups) calling for the abolition of the FBI because of Waco, or of the CIA because of Aldrich Ames?

Is it excessive to remind ourselves of Mao Tse-Tung's Cultural Revolution? In 1966, the People's Republic of China, also under the name of "democracy," ridiculed artistic and intellectual expression and humiliated artists and intellectuals as "elitist" bearers of foreign ideas. Losing a few dollars in federal subsidy is hardly the same as outright censorship, imprisonment or worse, but for artistic and intellectual institutions in this country economic strangulation can be just as lethal. The cultural consequences will certainly be the same: the dumbing down of an entire nation.

Obviously, individual poets, novelists and scholars can always support their artistic and intellectual habits by working at other jobs. T.S. Eliot found employment in a bank, Wallace Stevens ran an insurance agency, Faulkner and Fitzgerald went to Hollywood. But dance groups cannot take jobs in banks and theater companies cannot take refuge in insurance offices. And it is nonsense to believe that private funds, which have been diminishing lately rather than increasing (and which are largely reserved for multicultural projects anyway) will compensate for the growing deficits caused by the



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collapse of the endowments.

It doesn't take a prophet to see that we face the imminent loss of countless artistic and intellectual institutions, particularly the smaller ones, some of which depend on endowment support for as much as 10 percent of their budgets. Oh, the dinosaurs will survive, of course—cultural bastions such as the Metropolitan Museum, the Boston Symphony, the San Francisco Opera. But a relatively modest company (such as, I confess, my own American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge) will be able to sustain another major cut in subsidy only by doubling its ticket prices. (This will make the theater truly "elitist.") To justify these high prices, the fare will inevitably become more commercial, thus completing a process, already widely advanced, of erasing the distinction between the nonprofit world, which is at least nominally devoted to art, and the profit world, which is entirely driven by the market. And the effort to build an alternative cultural system—democratic in the sense of being available to anyone with an appetite for the imagination—will have come to an end.

One cannot begin to describe the climate of demoralization among those who have been trying over the years to educate the minds and stimulate the imaginations of American citizens. Those efforts were experiencing considerable success, even in the theater. Serious audiences were growing, serious playwrights were multiplying. The endowments were essential, not just for their comparatively small grants, not just because they helped to generate private funds from sluggish foundations, corporations and individuals. They were important because at their best they served as the consciences of the field. Without them, we are left to contemplate a culture without guidance, principle or purpose.

This is a particularly squalid moment in our history, a moment of defeat and desolation. Running through my head is a passage from *Three Sisters*, in which Chekhov compares Andrei Prozorov to a beautiful expensive bell, raised with the help of countless people, then carelessly allowed to fall and smash. Lacking the financial support and the moral example of the endowments, it will take at least another thirty years to raise that bell again. But long before that time, thanks to our duly elected representatives, we will have regained our position as the dumbest and most philistine democracy in the Western world. •

Little Big Man

BY JAMES WOOD

The Information by Martin Amis

(Harmony Books, 374 pp., $24)

For much of this century, English literature has been at furtive war with its American pretender. It has been a fight for the throne, a race to see who would lead the age. As English literature has lost that race, so it has become defensive: the scepter has turned into a baton, and the English have been unwilling to hand it over. Virginia Woolf, in an essay about American fiction published in 1925, conceded that the Americans were now like the Elizabethans, "coining new words." In England, she thought, the word-coining power had lapsed. Yet she judged American literature "an expressive ugly vigorous slang," and hoped that "the English influence may well predominate."

But the English influence did not predominate. Since the war, English fiction has fallen into facetiousness, miniaturism and metaphysical complacency. Only in England would the campus novels of David Lodge and Malcolm Bradbury be thought a gift rather than an apology. In particular, there has been a failure of language, of "word-coining power." Convalescent and timorous, English fictional prose has seemed unwilling to take the contemporary air.

Martin Amis's importance in English writing is that he is one of the few writers of his generation to have recognized these enfeeblements. He has tried to awaken his language to an age that has become the American Age; and he has produced a true literary slang, fattened on contemporary swill. One of the methods of transformation, as befits a writer who has argued that this has been the century of the American novel, has been to Americanize his prose and placements. In *Money* (1984), he let the grotesque pornographer John Self frolic in Manhattan. *London Fields* (1989), his last big novel, was partly narrated by an American writer.

For the prose, Saul Bellow, Amis's greatest influence, has provided the radiant emergencies necessary for the task. Or rather, Amis has taken from Bellow what is most easily imitable. Bellow may well have given Amis his Swiftian theme, as well as his fondness for lurching italics, when he has a character say, for example, in *The Adventures of Augie March*: "The big investigation today is into how *bad* a guy can be, not how good he can be." From Bellow, Amis gets his streaming syntax and parenthetical interruptions, his boisterous plurals and compounds.

More problematically, Bellow has lent Amis the example of his peculiar seriousness, his accountability to the age. From him, Amis has learned to drop his characters deep into the tank of the contemporary and watch them flail. John Self, in *Money*, is "addicted to the twentieth century"; the vibrant thug Keith Talent, in *London Fields*, is "modern, modern." When, in his new novel, *The Information*, we encounter a phrase such as "the press of sense data"; or, "he also made mental preparations. The state Richard sought was one of disparity readiness"; or, "Mrs. Verulam was a modern person, and routinely traded in information," we hear not only Bellow's high melody but his high themes—his own "disparity readiness."

Amis also brings a very English comic talent to his writing, with all the strengths and weaknesses of that tradition. It is the line of comic burlesque that connects Fielding to Thomas Love Peacock to Dickens. Amis has the old English interest in the grotesque and the evil. This tradition allows for authorial asides and ribaldries. It also allows, alas, for a certain vulgarity, or simplicity. Amis has Dickens's tendency toward caricature—toward applying a comic collar so tightly to his subjects that they lack aeration: like Dickens, he loves lists; and like Dickens, he ripples and writes in fluent surges, in comic riffs. Unlike Dickens, however, he is often at his best in these riffs. The stylistic principle is repetition and inversion, as in this chorus from *Money*:

> You just cannot park round here any more. Even on a Sunday afternoon you just cannot park round here any more. You can doublepark on people: people can doublepark on you. Cars are doubling while houses are halving. Houses divide, into two, into four, into sixteen. If a landlord

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> or developer comes across a decent-sized room he turns it into a labyrinth, a Chinese puzzle. The bell-button grills in the flakey porches look like the dashboards of ancient spaceships. Rooms divide, rooms multiply. Houses split—houses are tripleparked. People are doubling also, dividing, splitting.

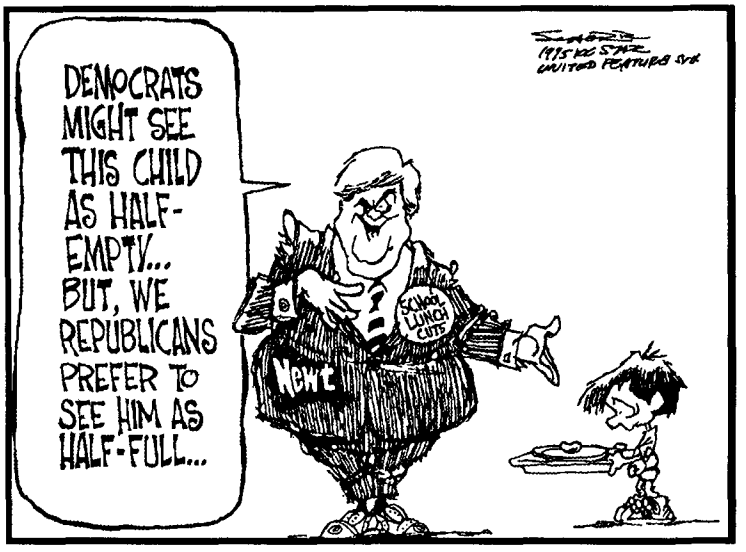
Just as, say, Mrs. Gargery's funeral in *Great Expectations* is funny when it should be solemn, and ritualized when it should be spontaneous, so Amis's joke here twirls away from a simple comic inversion: from the nonsensical idea that there is no space to park while there is space to doublepark.

The Information is about literary rivalry, though not about American and English rivalry, except insofar as the novel registers that literary success for the English novelist now means a successful twelve-city author tour in the States. Gwyn Barry is the author of a novel called *Amelior*, some ill-written liberal froth about a group of people who get together on an unnamed island to talk about solving the world's problems. Morally spotless and awfully written, it is very bad and very successful. In the opinion of Richard Tull, his rival and old Oxford friend, "*Amelior* would only be remarkable if Gwyn had written it with his foot."

Tull, from whose viewpoint most of the novel is written, has dedicated himself to Gwyn's destruction. As a writer, he has been spectacularly unsuccessful. His dauntingly modernist novel, called *Untitled*, "with its octuple time scheme and its rotating crew of sixteen unreliable narrators," lies unread on his agent's desk. (Of course, he and Gwyn share an agent.) Richard spends most of his time reviewing books: "He was very good at book reviewing. When he reviewed a book, it stayed reviewed." He dribbles away a day a week at a vanity publishing firm called The Tantalus Press. They publish not just "bad literature. It was anti-literature. Propaganda, aimed at the self." And his novels are the kind of books that need subsidies of not only money but generosity: "If you homogenized all the reviews... then the verdict on *Aforethought* [his first novel] was as follows: nobody understood it, or even finished it, but equally, nobody was sure it was shit."

The comedy in this novel is simple, a little puerile, often very funny. But it is a self-mutilating comedy. *The Information* is trapped in its destructive patterns of repetition and inversion. Such is the nature of the burlesque pair as Amis establishes it that the novel's jokes come in identical and unbreakable sets, like plastic tableware. It is an implacable rule of the book, for instance, that Richard Tull will fail at every attempt he makes to destroy Gwyn Barry. He tries to have him beaten up, but the attackers mistake Richard for Gwyn and beat him up instead. It is another implacable rule that no one can read Richard's novel, *Untitled*, without becoming physically sick. This is repeated throughout the book, so that no one ever finishes *Untitled*. And it is a rule of the novel that we only ever see Richard reviewing enormous and friendless biographies of minor poets with titles such as: *The Soul's Dark Cottage: A Life of Edmund Waller*, or *The Character Of Sir Thomas Overbury (1581-1613)*.

These are Amis's comic routines. Whenever Gwyn's fortunes increase, Richard's decline: while Gwyn is shortlisted for a huge American prize called the Profundity Requital, Richard's agent develops a migraine on page seven of *Untitled*. When Gwyn is sent on a royal publicity tour in the States, Richard is sent with him to write a long profile of "Gwyn On Tour." So the book is a revenger's comedy: as in a cartoon—as in *Tom and Jerry*—its rivals exist for each other. The point of such cartoons is an uncancelable frustration. The building block is repetition. As long as the novel remains cartoonish, the structures do their work; but when *The Information* seeks any kind of real seriousness, they are a prison. Since Richard and Gwyn



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exist for each other, they are—exactly like Tom and Jerry—dull when separated. And, since they exist so severely for each other, they hardly exist at all for the reader. One expects to be able to peel them off the page.

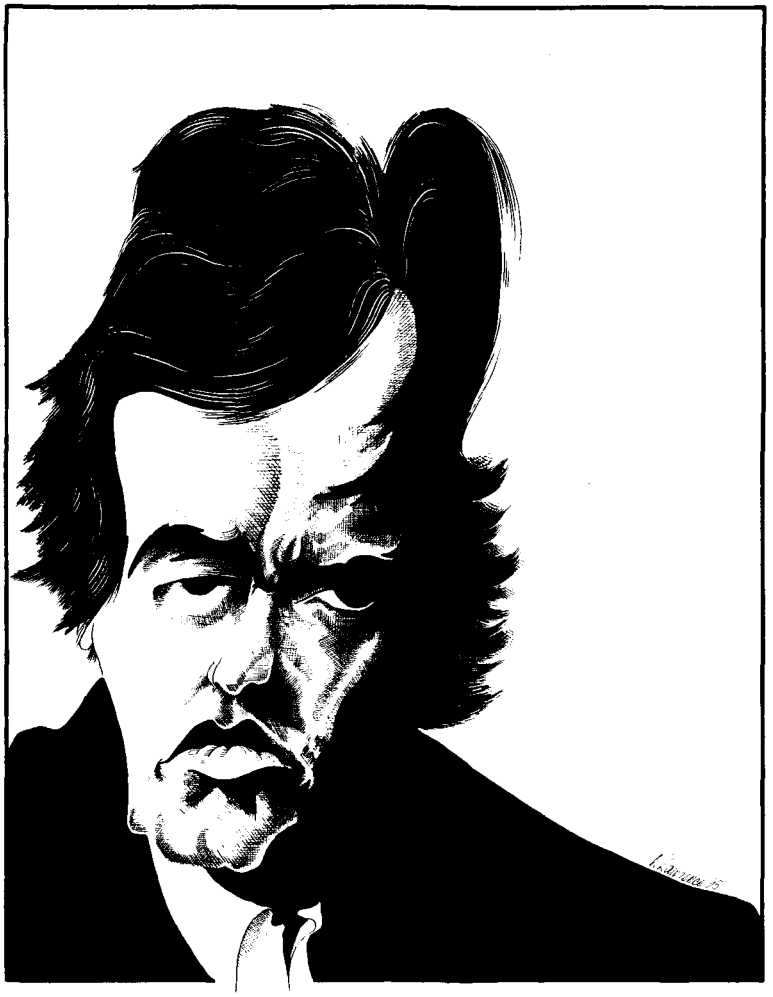
The literary world, with its pieties and *putti*, its fake gods and grounded angels, is a fine hall for Amis to sack, and he lays about himself very happily. Still, it is perhaps too quiescent a target. The satiric defenestration is rather easily performed. There again, given Amis's own ordeal at the hands of the alleged "literary world" (his headline-bucking advance, his much-debated need for expensive oral surgery, his witless enemies and unwanted friends), the portrait seems almost soft. Richard's agent tells him that "writers need definition. The public can only keep in mind one thing per writer. Like a signature. Drunk, young, male, fat, sick: you know."

Richard hardly needs to be told this. He has his own theories about diminishing returns in literature. He has been working on a book called *The History of Increasing Humiliation*, a book "accounting for the decline in the status and virtue of literary protagonists. First gods, then demigods, then kings, then great warriors, great lovers, then burghers and merchants and vicars and doctors and lawyers. Then social realism: you. Then irony: me." He has his novel published in the States by Bold Agenda Inc., a shadowy publishing giant who have decided that their image needs correction—political correction. Their new fiction list begins with *Untitled*, and two other books: *Hush Now* by Shanana Ormolu Davis and *Cowboy Boots* by John Two Moons. Richard is included because the failed white male modernist is rare, too, now. He later discovers that the firm has published only a few "courtesy copies."

So here we are, once again, in Amis's own dwindling and scarred world. London, where both Richard and Gwyn live, is seen under an apocalyptic cloud, much as it was in *London Fields*, raging and Americanized by crime. As in most of Amis's fiction, the chosen area is Notting Hill Gate and the West London hinterland. Amis is by now the Napoleon of Notting Hill and must return to the scene of old victories; but one feels this revisited ground is becoming too heavily grooved.

And Amis does not write well about London in his new book. *London Fields* yielded the sublime fantasy of gray-hooded city pigeons in "their criminal balaclavas," and had marvelous slashes of description, particularly of West London's balding and dismal parks: "the untouchable youths in their spikes, the meteorology of the sky, the casteless old wedged into benches." Now, apparently, the elderly have been mugged off the page. Richard takes his twin sons, Marco and Marius, to what he calls "Dogshit Park." The untouchable youths are still there, though: "While snorting and giggling, one pale youth was also managing to taunt his dog *and* eat crisps." (This is Amis at his most serrated; in a stroke he conjures a recognizable inner-city aimlessness.) Here there is jogging and crime:

> the multiple single mothers in crayon-color beachwear, the splat and splot of English skin ... the joggers pounding the outer track in scissoring shellsuits of magenta, turquoise ... past the flat-roofed park toilets where a boy younger than Marco had recently been raped while his mother tapped her foot on this same piece of asphalt ...



MARTIN AMIS BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Since *Money*, Amis has painted a world of vaporized motivation and collapsed subjectivity. The more intellectually respectable parts of this are to be found in Bellow; Amis's interest in ecological crisis, millennial fatigue and—in the new novel—the stars and quantum mechanics, is his own. *The Information*'s cast of characters—which in addition to Richard and Gwyn includes thugs, hustlers, aristocrats, the human furniture at the local pub, the illiterate and the morally myopic—are either hollow or bloated with false self-consciousness. All of them have been mentally colonized by the contemporary media, especially trash television; all of them are happy sponges for "the press of sense data." In Richard's local pub, the regulars know that Richard is different, a literary man, an intellectual. They need a nickname for him. They call him Cedric, after the host of an "intellectual" gameshow on television—"often, in such quandaries, a TV tie-in can grant clarity." Naturalness has disappeared and with it naturalness of literary representation: "The black kid cannot just be black any more. Nobody can just be somebody anymore. Pity about that."

As in Bellow's work, the writer sends out his surrogates, his porous scouts bloodily sensitive to the culture's moral declensions. Where Bellow is suggestive though, Amis tends to tell us: "Congratulations: here was the culture, and he was living in it, to the full." England has declined, it seems, like Richard's literary genres; it is a story of increasing national humilation, from moral pastoral to urban *flic*. Hearing birds singing outside his study, Richard reflects: "Say birds were just parrots and learned their songs from what they heard: those trills and twitters were imitations of mountain

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rivulets, of dew simpering downwards through the trees. Now the parrot had left its jungle and stood on a hook in a pub shouting 'Bullshit!'" Of course, this is the novelist that is being described here, not the bird. Since the black kid cannot just be black anymore, and the birds cannot just be birds anymore, the novelist cannot just be a novelist anymore. The novelist has lost his dewy innocence, too; the novelist no longer trills and twitters; the novelist shouts "Bullshit!" a lot.

Politely put, the novelist ironizes. The late-twentieth-century collapse means that this is all he can still do. The calamity of the situation, however, demands that he stay ahead of the game, as the novelist used to. But what are his resources? Only irony is left. This is the usual defense of the postmodern condition: the melting of those stabilities that enabled the writer to act as if he were omniscient now throws him in the soup with the rest of us. Being a postmodernist—there is a character called Martin Amis in this new book, too—Amis has already hammered out his protective armor. He has Richard reflect on his weaknesses as a writer, in particular the fault that "he wasn't innocent enough. Writers are innocent. Tolstoy was certainly innocent. Even Proust was innocent. Even *Joyce* was innocent."

As I say, this is the plan. But Amis's greatest weakness as a writer is not that he is not innocent enough, but that he is too knowing. His work seems to say: the novelist no longer knows anything with certainty in the old George Eliot sense; but he can still be knowing. Yet the opposite of innocence is not knowingness, it is guilt. In literary terms, this could be a despairing irony, a sense of shared existential entrapment (as Camus shares his characters' entrapment) or shared grief (as Bellow laughs and cries with his characters). One can accept that the old bird-twittering innocence is gone. But Amis is too clever. He is always an adjective ahead of his subjects; always an adjective ahead of wonderment.

This separates him from his great literary influence. Amis rides a brief crest of satiric advantage over his subjects, but Bellow shares the deeper current of comic pathos. Bellow's heroes have fallen, certainly: Herzog asks Heidegger, despairingly, "When was our fall into the quotidian?" But they and their creator measure their fallenness without glibness. They grasp at greatness; they go about their business under the beady eye of eternity. "We human creatures should be at play before the Lord—the higher the play, the more pleasing to God," is how the narrator of *More Die of Heartbreak* puts it. Bellow's heroes resist their diminished inheritance, for they are "a kind of being filled with death-knowledge, and also filled with infinite longings." In their longing is their absurdity (their intellectual vanities, confusions, peccadilloes), but also their nobility. Amis's heroes have no nobility. Theirs is the comedy of devils, already on the other side. Bellow's is the comedy of displaced angels.

Still, Amis is occasionally capable of wonderment. At his best, his satiric knowingness is not just cleverness, but a deep literary gift. He has an hospitable ear for cadence and rhythm, and for paradox. It is the old English balance between composure and collapse. The prose, insisting on degradation but never enacting it, writes better than the world lives. There is a perfect list, in this novel, of bookshops encountered by Richard in the States: "the Muzaked and mallish, the underlit and wood-paneled and pseudo-Bodleiaic, the disco-Montparnassian." Only a very good writer would hear how well that final "disco-Montparnassian" buttons up the sentence. Or this, probably the best paragraph in the novel, in which Richard and Gwyn set out on their flight to the States:

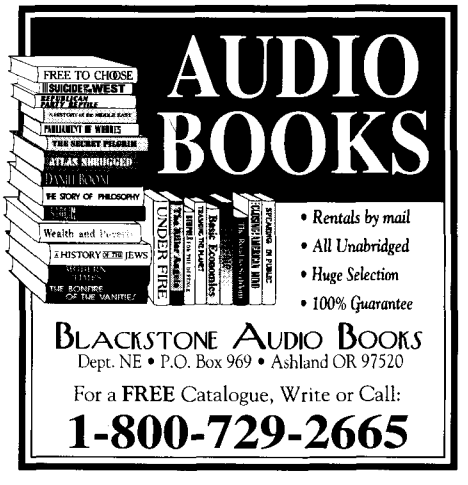
> Richard sat in Coach. His seat was non-aisle, non-window, and above all non-smoking. It was also non-wide and non-comfortable. Hundreds of yards and hundreds of passengers away, Gwyn Barry, practically horizontal on his crimson barge, shod in prestige stockings and celebrity slippers, assenting with a smile to the coaxing refills of Alpine creekwater and sanguinary burgundy with which his various young hostesses strove to enhance his caviar tartlet, his smoked-salmon pinwheel and asparagus barquette, his prime fillet tournedos served on a timbale of tomato and a tapenade of Castilian olives—Gwyn was in First.

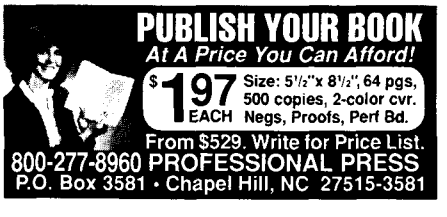
This passage is as good as Pope, and just as calculatedly literary. Amis controls the mock-heroic tone perfectly, as well as the daintiness of paradox that this style requires ("prestige stockings" and "celebrity slippers"). Different registers jostle: the savvy and journalistic ("non-wide and non-comfortable") with the formal and literary ("strove to enhance"). Gwyn is princely on his "barge," and the word is chosen to jolt us backward to another great set-piece of travel, Enobarbus's description of Cleopatra on *her* barge, in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Yet bewilderingly, for much of this novel, Amis squanders his talent in vulgarities and easy hits. He seems happy to fall under the table and roll around in farcical sawdust. Again and again, he falls into comic jags and riffs. Some are crude and some are funny. As usual, smoking and drinking pricks the acutest commentaries from Amis:

> Richard lit up and inhaled needfully. He gazed at his cigarette. He didn't really want to smoke it. He wanted to eat it.... Paradoxically, he no longer wanted to give up smoking: what he wanted to do was take up smoking. Not so much to fill the little gaps between cigarettes with cigarettes (there wouldn't be time anyway), or to smoke two cigarettes at once. It was more that he felt the desire to smoke two cigarettes at once. It was more that he felt the desire to smoke a cigarette even when he was smoking a cigarette. The need was and wasn't being met.

That Amis's novels fall so naturally into comic recitatives tells us something about these books' often journalistic nature. There is a failure to connect these recitatives to a larger music. They are sealed—against each other, and hence against living with each other inside the novel. This is because they are units of the already known. For Amis at such moments, the world does not exist to be torn into novelty, it exists to be smartly slapped around a little. He puts down his riffs and they invite no answers back. He has killed off his subjects with words. Thus, Richard compares the uniformity

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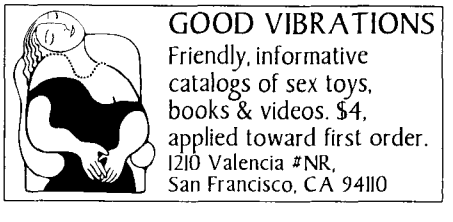

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of the English literary scene with American diversity: "Not like America, where spavined Alabaman must mingle with Virginian nabob, where tormented Lithuanian must extend his hand to the seven-foot Cape Codder with those true-blue eyes." The language wants to be sophisticated, and it is certainly knowing; but Amis is not transforming anything here. These people exist in the catalog, already indexed and adjectivally tagged ("spavined," "tormented").

Stylistically, *The Information* is confusingly variegated. There are moments when Amis reminds us that he can indeed see the world and make it fresh for us: a bike messenger seen in "his city scuba gear"; or "a loose flock of city birds [that] reared up like a join-the-dots puzzle of a human face or fist." But whole sentences—indeed, whole scenes—are soused in vulgarity and silliness. There is a wearisome interest in shit: a pilot so scared that he literally shits himself; "Richard's hair was basically in deep shit." Indeed, Richard begins to imagine that he smells of shit: "If you looked like shit, and felt like shit and behaved like shit, then pretty soon you were going to smell like shit." The reader can actually catch a paragraph turning, like a penitent, away from crudeness into richer and more refined habits: "The doors were open to the evening traffic of Notting Hill Gate. Along with the seams of cigarette smoke, the pub vapors and pub humors, the pie waft and the yeasty burp of beer, there was also the breath of cars like a gray mesh at table height." The "yeasty burp" is itself a burp; but the "gray mesh" of traffic fumes is a phrase of poetry.

Were the novel content to be only a comic romp, none of this would matter. But Amis would like *The Information* to tell us important things: about the nature of literary rivalry and the male midlife crisis. (Yes, your suspicion that the midlife crisis is not an important thing is exactly right. Amis does not share it, alas.) Amis has always had an uneasy relation with his themes, with deep matter, with seriousness. His novels tend to swallow their themes whole like snakes, so that their shapes and outlines can still be seen. In his collection of stories, *Einstein's Monsters*, Amis swallowed nuclear warfare. *London Fields* was nibbed with sermons about eco-crisis, global warming and apocalypse. Its characters appeared to act as if under crisis, but this was because Amis would keep on telling us they did.

In *The Information*, we have left the weather for the stars. Amis looks heavenward as eagerly as Isaiah. He is forever comparing his characters to stars and to their glittering entropy. And with what portentousness! "He [Richard] looked up ... the usual metropolitan sky with its six or seven stars weakly guttering. Raw land can do nothing about them but cities hate stars and don't want their denizens to be reminded of how it really goes with ourselves and the universe." Since we are not reminded enough, Amis reminds us again and again that everything "was made in the stars: in stars that explode when they die.... This is to put Richard's difficulties in context. The context of the universe." (In a recent profile of John Travolta in *The New Yorker*, Amis wrote: "In the firmament, as elsewhere, the brightest stars have the shortest lives: blue giant to black hole. But the universe isn't old enough to encompass the degeneration that Travolta managed. It will take ten billenia for our sun to reach its ultimate state, frozen in crystalline undetectability. Travolta did it in ten years.")

Ah, Richard's difficulties. We hear much about them. Richard's difficulties are not just literary. He is dragging himself through a midlife crisis. Richard is forty, and his hair is falling out, and his bones are sighing, and his ego is tousled. His sexuality is sleepy but stubborn. Being forty, he is privy to "the information, which is nothing, and comes at night." The information, apparently, tells him that he will die. Meanwhile, the streets yield *their* information: "Before, girls looked at him and showed interest or no interest. Then for a while, they looked past him. Now they looked through him.... Because he no longer snagged on the DNA. Because he was over on the other side, and partly invisible, like all the ghosts who walked there."

The sentimentality of that last passage is characteristic. Without fail, at every moment that Amis addresses this subject, his cooling system breaks down. His supplies of hipness and cleverness run dry. He becomes lachrymose, self-pitying, bleating. He wants to squeeze a pathos that is not there, which we do not feel. Men of Richard's age, according to Amis, slobber and snivel in their sleep. When their partners ask them what the matter is, they reply: "Nothing. No it isn't anything really. Just sad dreams." Richard cries in his sleep. He used to be suspicious of female tears, "but now he was forty, and he knew." And now even the climate is sprightlier than Richard: "Now that he was forty, he feared the cold. Now he was forty, something animal in him feared the winter."

The problem here is partly that such moments of soul-expansion sit uneasily with a narrative of comic burlesque. Richard hardly exists: Why should we grieve for a ghost? The deeper problem is that this is not a literary subject adequate to the weight with which it is loaded. It is strange that Amis would think that a receding hairline and an inability to pull the girls supports any analysis, let alone that it is worth putting in "the context of the universe." Perhaps this is the genre-withering and hero-decline that Amis had in mind put in action, a story of increasing humiliation: Shakespeare's Richard II worried about his crown; Amis's Richard worries about his double crown.

Had Amis put any metaphysical lather on this, and turned Richard's midlife crisis into a larger apprehension of death—had he made "the information" something other than mere information—it might have worked. But it is difficult not to laugh at Richard and his ontological pomposity. It is difficult not to laugh, that is, until a significant rent in the novel toward its end. Richard is thinking about women crying. Women, he thinks, understand about time and mortality:

> They knew they would be half dead at forty-five. This information did not fall in the path of men. Men, at forty-five, were in "the prime of life"... They get the Change. We get the Prime. And this is the reason why our bodies weep and seep in the night, because we're half dead too, and don't know how or why.

The fatuity of this insight is not the point. The point is that Richard is only forty. It is Amis himself who is forty-five. And it is Amis who speaks here, for himself and his generation and his battered gender. ("We" vs. "they.") Amis, through Richard, appears to want to fight a lot of wars on behalf of his gender. (The novel's misogyny may well be imported from Bellow's work. Where is the anxiety of influence when you need it?) The reader smarts at this intrusion and is then sad for its author. Perhaps this is why Amis is unable to write about Richard's midlife crisis without—in stylistic terms—bursting into tears? Is this private grief the reason for the sentimentality in a writer who is never sentimental? Certainly, it explains the impression the novel gives of something incompletely digested, something painful and a little embarrassing.

As a writer, Amis speaks distinctly. The creation of a partly Americanized yet English comic voice has been his great achievement. Yet he does not speak to his reader; we are not swayed by his creations. And it is this same comic voice, which appears so emancipatory, that is actually

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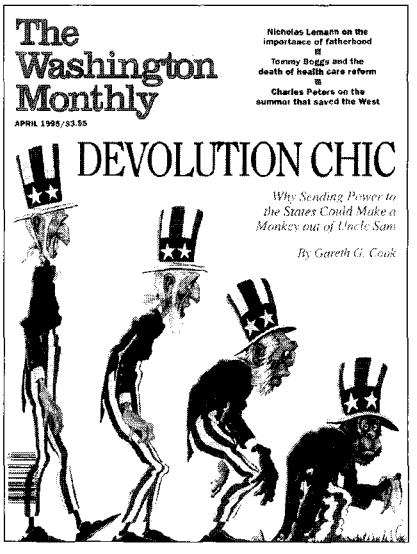
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gagging its creator. *The Information* is full of brilliance and flame, but it is a fundamentally unserious novel—or perhaps we should say, since it speaks with a distressingly personal note, that it is serious only to Martin Amis. His burlesque smothers gravity, his knowingness seals feeling. Amis needs to find new information.

JAMES WOOD is the chief literary critic of *The Guardian* in London until August, when he joins THE NEW REPUBLIC.

The Thinker

BY MICHAEL KINSLEY

To Renew America by Newt Gingrich

(HarperCollins, 260 pp., $24)

"Just a decade or so" from now, you will be glad to hear, you will sit in a "diagnostic chair" in your very own home when you're sick, instead of going to the doctor. That is, unless the "counterculture" responsible for what's gone wrong with America since 1965—which is nearly everything—continues its stranglehold on our great country. And by the year 2020 there will be "honeymoons in space." The pouting-sex-kitten patrols of the liberal media have made much of Newt's innuendoes about the joy of weightlessness on such an occasion. They typically fail to note his caveat that the view of Earth from the honeymoon suite will be "even more" important.

No question, our current speaker of the House is special. Tom Foley could not have written this book. But to review it, even negatively, is to fall into Gingrich's trap. The task requires taking seriously what is mostly an uninteresting collection of clichés and bromides that would never be published if the author weren't who he is. ("An America that ... insists its children learn the core values of American civilization ... will find each challenge more invigorating than the last.") Thus reviewing the book gives credence to Gingrich's self-image as a serious thinker, not just a successful politician. And thereby it helps to legitimize a project by which the speaker gets rich due to his role as a public official. Very irritating.

Nevertheless, we persevere. Lately Gingrich has been answering questions about whether he will run for president by saying—with hubris so unjustified that it is almost (but not quite) endearing—that he expects not to need to run himself because the other Republican candidates will "co-opt" the "ideas" here. But Lamar Alexander, Bob Dornan and the rest can save themselves the $24. Almost all of the "ideas" here will be wearily familiar—above all to the announced GOP presidential candidates, who have mouthed them often. As *The Economist* summarized Gingrich's "ideas" in its own review of the book: "America must make God central, provide opportunities rather than handouts, restore virtue, encourage fathers to take responsibility for their children," and so on. It's true that even Pat Buchanan probably hasn't thought of calling on Americans, as Gingrich does, to "bring back extinct species"—perhaps the ultimate conservative agenda. But now that the idea has been raised, is Buchanan likely to want to co-opt it?

Even some of Gingrich's critics find his dinosaur fixation—his sci-fi side—charming. Some also like the boyish "happy camper" persona that he sometimes presents as a relief from his equally boyish but less appealing sneery-brat posture. Yet those unredeemable cynics who suspect that this is all mostly calculated shtick will get some support from this book. "At heart," the speaker declares, "I am still a happy 4-year-old who gets up every morning hoping to find a cookie that friends or relatives may have left me somewhere. I still read books and wander into things just as I did many long Christmases ago." Aren't I adorable?

That "cookie" business is an inferior version of Ronald Reagan's classic story about the boy who looks for a pony in a pile of horse manure. As for reading books and wandering into things, I think what the speaker is trying to communicate here (with the help of his "co-writer" Bill Tucker) is that he performs both these activities simultaneously. Surely an intellectual of his stature would not wish to brag about the mere fact of reading books, and a politician of his skill would not wish to raise questions about why he is wandering into things—especially on Christmas Day.

But Gingrich is not above revealing a certain intellectual insecurity. "As a former assistant professor at West Georgia College," he writes, "and a Ph.D. in European History who recently taught at Kennesaw State College, Reinhardt College and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, I was fascinated to read in the April 4 *New York Times* an article buried on page D24...." (That passage will also give you a sense of the book's Dictaphone style.) Supposedly *To Renew America* derives from a college course the speaker has been teaching. If this stuff is a "college course," we need no more sermons from Gingrich's friends on the right about how *liberals* are destroying academic standards.

Before the book devolves, about halfway through, into Republican boilerplate (short chapters against crime, drugs, taxes and so on), it aspires to a familiar literary genre: the gung-ho philosopher-salesman's all-purpose American guide to success in life, combining the promise of riches, personal salvation and an understanding of the dynamics of history through a series of ten keys-to-this and seven points-to-remember-about-that. Newt's gurus are the futurist Alvin Toffler, the business visionary W. Edward Deming (he of "total quality management") and the historians Will and Ariel Durant. (The Durants' theory of history was memorably summarized by Cullen Murphy years ago in *The Atlantic*: "Bad things happen, but the human spirit is indomitable.... Somehow the ascent of man inexorably proceeds, at a steady inclination of perhaps six degrees. The first amphibians creep out of the primal soup. Soon they are making tools. Then along comes Spinoza.")

Lesser heroes are introduced as well. There is Roger Milliken, president of America's leading textile firm (and unmentioned—a major Gingrich contributor) who is praised for a "corporate culture" in which junior executives challenge the boss. A more important secret to the success of the Milliken Corporation may be trade protection laws that go against everything Newt claims to stand for. Textiles are one of America's most protected industries, and Roger Milliken invests heavily in politicians to keep it that way. But the author doesn't get into all that.

Then there's "Bill Loughrey of Scientific Atlanta," who opened Gingrich's eyes to the inefficiency of the federal government. "If the federal government had improved at the same pace as the computer chip," he notes wryly, "it would

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only have four employees and a total budget of $100,000. While Loughrey is clearly being facetious, there is an enormous truth to this analogy." In fact the analogy, which is typical of the country-club sallies that dot the book, is idiotic. No human organization, public or private, not even Intel or Microsoft, has or could have improved in efficiency at the rate of the microchip. While the federal government is no model of efficiency, the number of federal civilian employees has been roughly stable for decades, and has been declining under President Clinton. It is the Republicans' beloved state governments whose payrolls have exploded.

It may seem a waste of energy to apply rigorous standards of fact, logic or even common sense to the mouthings of a politician. Gingrich himself notes, with unintended humility, that "when people turn toward political leaders ... all too often they encounter meaningless platitudes." But since he aspires to be regarded as a thinker, not just a pol, a certain stab at rigor may not be unreasonable.

"In our day," remarks the author, "too many intellectuals, columnists, and bureaucrats have come to accept the European notion that government matters more than its citizens." This is a typical sweeping Gingrich declaration. Can he supply a single example (he offers none in the book) of anyone—even an accursed European—endorsing the idea that "government" matters more than "citizens"? To the extent that this assertion has any meaning at all, it means that individuals must sometimes be expected to suppress their own desires for the good of society as a whole—a notion that Gingrich himself expounds on occasion, though on other occasions he condemns "the counterculture left" for promoting the very idea of "society" (his quotes). The relation between the individual and the state is obviously one of the great political questions. And, to be slightly fair, we all share the speaker's vague sense that they have different notions about such things in Europe. But an author who brags that he is a man of "ideas" ought to be offering more than a vague sense repackaged as a soundbite.

Those intellectuals with their funny European notions are just some of the straw men Our Hero slays in the course of his crusade to save civilization. Enormous damage has been done, we learn, by "elite critics of the can-do spirit" (purveyors, presumably, of the "why-bother" spirit). Then there are those by whom "we were told" (when? "sometime in the 1960s," of course) that the English language was a "racist, Colonial way of speaking" that shouldn't be "imposed" on poor people. Poor Newt! It seems that mysterious unnamed blowhards are constantly importuning him with cartoonish versions of liberal arguments. Or even with bizarre arguments that defy political characterization. "Whenever someone suggests that we can be complacent about survival in our age of rapid technological change, I wonder what they [sic] would have predicted for the Indo-American civilizations a few years before the Spanish reached the New World." Touché! He's certainly nailed that misguided fellow.

But, elsewhere Gingrich-the-Historian's understanding of history is a little shaky or, rather, a little convenient:

> The so-called business cycle is in large part a product of the theories of American economists. Since their theories predict that economic recessions will always follow growth, they will advise the Federal Reserve Board to follow policies that slow growth and increase interest rates, that in turn will choke off the growth and lead to a recession. This pattern may say more about American economists than it does about the American economy.

As a politician, Gingrich can spout such philistine stuff all day (though it will be interesting to see whether he blames any downturn in the next year on the Federal Reserve or on Bill Clinton). As a historian, he might have asked himself why, if "American economists" are to blame, business cycles have occurred in all societies throughout history. He might also have pondered why America's own business cycles have become far milder since economists started playing a major role in public policy in the 1930s. And elsewhere:

> Old-time segregationists used to argue that blacks couldn't be granted the rights of citizens because they weren't capable of the personal responsibilities that went with them. Dr. King proved them wrong. That is why he triumphed and segregation ended.

It is? This makes a nice homily, but it is historical nonsense verging on offensive nonsense. Today, talk of "responsibilities" may be fashionable and talk of "rights" may be out of fashion. But a promise to be "responsible" and thus somehow worthy of the basic rights of citizenship simply was not a theme of the civil rights movement in its glory days. Nor should it have been.

A more lighthearted example:

> One of the major reasons the spirit of adventure has gone out of space exploration is that we have allowed bureaucracies

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> to dominate too many of our scientific adventures. Look at the difference between the movies *The Right Stuff* and *Star Wars* and you will see what I mean.

Well you see, Mr. Speaker, the point is that *Star Wars* was *made up*. It didn't actually happen "long ago in a galaxy far away." It didn't actually happen at all. As a former assistant professor at West Georgia College and a Ph.D. in European History who recently taught at Kennesaw State College, Reinhardt College and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, you should be aware of that fact. *The Right Stuff*, by contrast, is a somewhat fictionalized version of events that really did happen, albeit in the atrocious 1960s. In real life, there is no way to travel through space without the assistance of a rather massive bureaucracy. A basic concept in the study of history, I would have thought, is the distinction between things that happened and things that never happened. But then I am not a historian.

Gingrich does not repeat in this book his egregious attempt to blame liberals for Susan Smith's decision to drown her two young sons, but he does drag the murders of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman ("while the children were asleep upstairs") and Tonya Harding's attack on Nancy Kerrigan into his general condemnation of the flawed culture that modern liberalism has allegedly created. Forget history. Has the man never read Shakespeare?

On current political issues, the author is equally slippery but more tedious. The mad Newtiness recedes, leaving us little to chew on but familiar GOP agitprop. A couple of examples, plucked from dozens, will suffice.

About gun control, Gingrich naturally makes the weary point that strict gun laws have failed to stop crime in Washington and New York, as if any one city or state can control the weapons trade in a nation with (for the moment, at least) open internal borders. But he does serve up the startling accusation that "liberals associate guns with violence." Guilty as charged, your honor! He then adds: "For some psychological reason, liberals are anti-gun but not anti-violent criminal." I would have enjoyed the professor's speculations on what that psychological reason might be. I've often wondered about the psychological roots of my fondness for violent criminals, especially combined with my irrational association of violence with guns, which I have an irrational hang-up about.

But instead of exploring this fascinating psychological conundrum, Gingrich retreats to more Reagan-style stupid anecdotes. "In Israel," he observes, "it is common on weekends to see young people walking around Jerusalem or Tel Aviv with Uzis at their sides.... Far from making people feel insecure, the sight of the weapons makes people feel safer." Yes, and I'd feel safer, too, if everyone carrying a gun around the streets of American cities was a trained member of the armed services with a weapon issued by the government. In Israel, suffice it to say, you cannot walk into a Wal-Mart and purchase the gun of your choice.

Pages of this book are devoted to the need for a balanced federal budget—a worthy cause, but one on which Gingrich flunks the basic test of intellectual honesty. (We don't expect intellectual honesty in a politician. But it is a nice feature in a thinker, a man of "ideas.") Gingrich observes that, between 1995 and 2002, federal revenues are projected to rise from $1.4 trillion to $1.8 trillion a year. Therefore, he writes, balancing the budget is just a matter of "slowing the growth of government spending." Indeed, compared with the past seven years, "we could spend $2.2 trillion *more* over the next seven years and still balance the budget." In fact, "It tells you how much money liberals need to run their programs" that an increase in government spending "is seen by Washington as a terrible *cut*."

The laughable dishonesty here consists of applying different rules to the revenue and spending sides of the equation. Why, after all, will annual revenues rise by almost a third over the next seven years? Not because of any tax increase. God forbid. The three reasons are inflation, population growth and productivity growth. The first two factors apply equally to the spending side—and the qualifying population for expensive programs like Medicare will grow disproportionately. This mathematical reality, not money-hungry liberals, is why government spending is projected to increase. It is like arguing that anyone should be able to walk from California to New York in a few hours, since the Earth's rotation is hurtling us all eastward at a rapid pace. Never mind that California and New York are also hurtling eastward at the same speed.

Of course there is a chapter on the urgent need for congressional term limits. Gingrich is said to be privately opposed to term limits, but he manages to work himself up into an impressive self-righteous lather notwithstanding. What's interesting about this is that, throughout *To Renew America*, the speaker portrays himself as exactly the sort of person term limits are supposed to spare us: the professional politician. It is not just that Gingrich is in his ninth term, while arguing that no one should serve more than six. It is a fair enough answer to that debating point to note that term limits will apply equally to everyone, fair and square, when they are enacted. But the central case for term limits is that the country should be governed by citizens with other careers, not by people for whom governing is their life's work. Yet Gingrich, in his egomania, reveals (or invents) himself as a professional politician like none other on the current stage and, perhaps, like none other in American history.

> "I have spent most of my life studying and working on the problem of how civilizations survive," Gingrich modestly reveals in the book's opening chapter. "It began when I was surprisingly young." At age 14, he abandoned dreams of becoming a paleontologist in favor of a political career.
>
> To this day, I can remember ... suddenly reaching the conclusion that civilizations can die. I realized that our civilization was facing a mortal threat from the Soviet empire and that some people had to be willing to dedicate their lives to protecting our way of life, our freedom, and our people. I also concluded that this was the kind of challenge that could not be passed off to others.

Noble. Of course, as Gingrich fails to note, he flubbed his one direct opportunity to protect America against the Communist threat when he ducked service in Vietnam. He passed off that challenge to others. And, unlike Bill Clinton, he did not publicly oppose the war or work to stop it so that those others would not have to serve and die either. In fact, the anti-war movement was part of the 1960 counterculture that Gingrich repeatedly blames for America's ills.

It turns out that what Gingrich had in mind was slightly different. "Perhaps it was simply that someone had to put helping one's country and trying to understand what is needed to survive at the center of his or her life." To that end, he began "an in-depth grounding in military history and military analysis that has served me well ever since." And after pondering "the whole question of spending my life on such a burdensome historic quest," young Newt concluded "that there was no moral choice except to immerse myself in the process of learning how to lead."

In the book's closing chapter, we learn that The Great Man's political obsession even predates his age-14 epiphany. (It is typical of this hasty, ghost written project that it cannot manage to get the basic myth-making straight.) At age 10, after lobbying a city official

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Newt found himself addressing the Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, City Council on the need for a municipal zoo. "When it appeared in the paper the next day, I was hooked forever on public life. The idea that you could make an impact if you worked hard enough was impressed on me permanently." The author fails to tell us, though, whether the zoo got built. Apparently that doesn't matter. What counted as "making an impact" was getting into the newspaper. Here, indeed, was the emergence of the Newt we all know and love. •

The Humanist

By Frederick Brown

Jean Renoir: Letters edited by Lorraine LoBianco and David Thompson

(Faber and Faber, 605 pp., $40)

In 1957 Jean Renoir spoke to an interviewer from *Les Cahiers du Cinéma* about the ephemerality of his art. He had embarked upon professional life twenty-three years earlier with the idea that a filmmaker's efforts, unlike a theater director's, result in a palpable legacy, and that the performance captured on film is analogous to the object produced by a painter or sculptor; but he had long since changed his mind. Negatives had been lost, among other calamities to have befallen him, and surviving copies of his work, which the public credulously accepted as authentic, had often been mangled for commercial ends. "In truth, film is something very impermanent," he declared, "not as impermanent as journalism, but less durable and solid than, say, a book."

His fears of impermanence might seem exaggerated, had he been someone other than Auguste Renoir's son. Certainly Jean Renoir enjoys a secure home in the pantheon of innovative cinéastes, and films such as *La Grande Illusion* and *La Règle du Jeu*, cut or whole, continue to enthrall audiences. But it is no less certain that his published work strengthens his claim upon our attention. In 1958 he brought out a brilliantly vivid book about his father based in part on conversations held during World War I. The literary qualities of that volume also inform a brief autobiography titled *My Life and My Films*, which appeared sixteen years later.

Then there are his letters. Renoir always found time for correspondence, especially during the 1940s, when he resided in southern California along with many other distinguished European refugees, and the publication after his death of *Lettres d'Amérique* revealed a keen observer of Hollywood mores. That selection has never been translated, unfortunately, but Renoir's American interlude is well represented in a handsome new volume, edited by Lorraine LoBianco and David Thompson, containing letters that enable one to track the filmmaker across most of his life.

Life began almost unimaginably far from everything Hollywood emblematizes. Born in September 1894, Jean Renoir spent his early childhood high above Paris in the outbuilding of a dilapidated estate called the Château des Brouillards. Although working-class Montmartre bustled nearby, the urban landscape hardly impinged upon this eighteenth-century *folie*, which was entered through a wrought-iron gate and overgrown with wild roses and lilac bushes. Just beyond the hedge that surrounded it, cows grazed on a field sufficient for their pasture. Several blocks south, the Moulin de la Galette spread anachronistic sails against a huge sky, while off to the north, and visible from a window of the Renoir pavilion, lay the Montmorency woods.

Here, in what he later remembered as a lost Eden, Jean, whose older brother Pierre had been stowed away at boarding school, enjoyed the solicitude of two women. Unable to cope alone, Mme Renoir, or Aline, summoned from her native Burgundian village of Essoyes an 18-year-old cousin named Gabrielle Renard who would model for Renoir senior and form with Renoir junior an immediate, permanent, loving bond. Having managed all kinds of young creatures on the family farm, she knew quite well how to cosset a little boy. For Jean, daily life was divided into two parts. "My mother was the tiresome part," he wrote,

> the person who ordered me to eat up my dinner, to go to the lavatory, to have a bath in the zinc tub which served for our morning ablutions. And [Gabrielle] was for fun, walks in the park, games in the sand pile, above all piggy-back rides, something my mother absolutely refused to do.

This maternal diarchy constituted a protective wall "softly padded" on the inside.

Relations between father and son were more bone than flesh. Despite his gentle nature, Auguste Renoir avoided emotional displays, except in the practice of his art. He was not one for hugging children, and this physical distance must have been reinforced in the mind of his second-born by the gaunt, grizzled figure he cut at 53, when he sired Jean. But where hands did not embrace, a powerful eye did. Renoir never entirely left home, even during his jaunts through sunny Provence. The elaborately framed images of nudes, children, flowers and landscapes that hung side by side in the Renoir household defined the boundaries of Jean's world, separating kin from alien, like totems or lares and penates. They pervaded the boy's consciousness of himself to such an extent that the sale of canvases, especially those that pictured his family, filled him with grim forebodings. "I knew that if I were deprived of them disaster would follow—a flood or an earthquake, a plague of locusts, even the disappearance of my father and mother and Gabrielle." As far back as memory reached, what seemed to assure permanence bespoke ephemerality.

That paradox grew upon him after 1897, when his family left the Château des Brouillards for a regular city flat on the rue La Rochefoucauld and, increasingly after 1900, when they committed themselves to a semi-nomadic life. "My father's was an errant kingdom," wrote Jean. To be sure, Auguste Renoir had always liked to gad about France, to visit Cézanne at Aix-en-Provence, Berthe Morisot at Mézy, Pissarro at Pontoise, Monet in Normandy. But with the Impressionist group, those still alive, separating into private agendas, his vagabondage became more migratory than impulsive and sociable. A house was bought in Essoyes, to which the Renoirs repaired every summer until 1910 or so. And in due course another, "Les Collettes," was acquired for winter use in Cagnes on the Mediterranean coast, where Auguste found, along with glorious light, welcome relief from the arthritic condition that eventually left him warped and paralyzed. According to the season, Jean was, as he put it, a Burgundy urchin rolling his "r's," a lisping Parisian and a deep-voiced Southerner.

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You deserve a factual look at...

Israel's Peace with the PLO

Can the leopard change his spots...the wolf become a lamb?

Two years ago, the world was electrified by "the handshake" and the mutual recognition of Israel and the PLO. The Israelis promised the PLO control initially over Gaza and Jericho, with autonomy over all of the "West Bank" and "final status" discussions on Jerusalem to follow. With two years of experience behind us, one wonders where this is going to lead.

What are the facts?

The PLO and Yassir Arafat. The aim is and has always been the notorious "phased plan": to eliminate Israel in two stages—first by creating a Palestinian state in any territory vacated by Israel and then using that state to foment an allied Arab assault against the truncated and critically vulnerable Jewish state.

Since the signing of the Oslo agreement two years ago, Arafat has not fulfilled the promises that he has made and the assurances that he has given. Terror has increased; more Israelis have been murdered and maimed by the palestinians than in any previous comparable period. Until the "handshake"Arafat was officially declared a terrorist by the United States government and was not allowed entry into our country. He is personally responsible for hundreds of assassinations and terrorist attacks. The fact that such a man could appear on the White House lawn, that he could shake hands with the President of the United States, and that he could be awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace is truly astonishing.

A mortal danger to Israel. Turning over control of the Gaza strip and any part of the "West Bank" to the Arabs puts Israel in mortal peril. The basic conflict is not between Israel and the "Palestinians", with whom some accommodation, some arrangement of autonomy, could certainly be reached. The basic conflict is with the Arab nations, most of which, with the sole exception of Egypt and Jordan, are still in a state of war with Israel. They are armed to the teeth, not just with "conventional" weapons, but with missiles that even today can reach any part of Israel, and with weapons of mass destruction—chemical, biological and nuclear.

With the "West Bank" in Arab hands, missiles won't be needed. Mortars and shoulder-held Stingers would suffice to threaten every commercial flight into and out of Israel, to impede the take-off of military airplanes and to threaten and rain destruction on the principal cities of Israel and its most important industrial, commercial and military installations. Sure, the world would insist that the new Palestinian state be demilitarized. But does anybody really believe that with Israel surrounded by mortal enemies, they would allow such a military vacuum to exist for any length of time—even in the unlikely case that the Palestinians would so desire? If it yielded the "West Bank", Israel would be only nine miles wide at its narrow waist—it would take no major military effort to slice it in half and to destroy it. No country should expose itself to such peril. But with the Judean hills in enemy hands, and without the elaborate warning system on those hills, Israel is totally indefensible and at the mercy of its enemies. That is the opinion of 100 U.S. generals and admirals who so reported to the President and to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"If it yielded the "West Bank", Israel would be only nine miles wide at its narrow waist—it would take no major military effort to slice it in half and to destroy it. No country should expose itself to such peril".

We all want peace and, surely, besieged Israel, which has been under constant attack since the day of its creation, wants peace more than anybody. And it is likely that such fervent wish for peace has led Israel into making fateful concessions to Yassir Arafat and the PLO. It will be almost impossible to reverse what has been done. The process of empowering the Palestinians will almost certainly result in a Palestinian state. Will it, as we are told, be "democratic" and peaceful? Not likely! Every one of the 22 Arab states is totalitarian, ruled autocratically, and ruthlessly abusive of human rights. Another Lebanon, carved on Israel's back, with never-ending strife and bloodshed is much more likely—a source of constant terrorist attacks against Israel and ultimately the source of a new Mid-East war. In such a war, Israel's ability to defend itself and to prevail would be in serious question.

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Facts and Logic about the Middle East

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Errant kingdoms make for truant princes. At none of the exclusive schools that he attended in Paris, Nice and elsewhere did Jean stay long enough to find purchase. Intolerant of discipline, he often ran away, knowing that his father, who regarded French secondary-school education as a form of child abuse, sympathized with his delinquencies. Somehow he passed the baccalaureate exam, but he apparently showed no disposition to challenge his mind any further, for it was proposed en famille that he become a blacksmith, a carpenter, a nurseryman or a game warden. Auguste forbade only commerce. The "mercenary trades" repelled him.

Instead he became a soldier, enlisting for three years in the cavalry, with tacit encouragement from his father, no doubt, who had ridden horseback during the Franco-Prussian conflict of 1870-71. Eighteen months later, World War I broke out. The proud Dragoon had hardly girded himself for battle when venereal disease laid him low. After weeks of convalescence he joined another regiment, the *chasseurs alpins*, and in April 1915, while patrolling between the lines near Colmar, suffered a leg wound so grievous that army surgeons would have amputated had Mme Renoir, who visited Jean at the Front (and succumbed to diabetes on her return), not objected. More weeks of convalescence followed, this time in Paris where Auguste kept him company. Undaunted, Jean soon thereafter volunteered for the air force and served first as an observer photographing enemy positions, then as a reconnaissance pilot. Not until his wound began to torment him again did he finally resume civilian life.

The war transformed Renoir for good and for ill. He would always limp on a painful leg and, worse still, shoulder a burden of guilt at having occasioned his mother's early death. But war had also afforded him experiences that he would draw upon in cinema and had given him the chance to know his father more intimately. Above all, it anchored him in comradeship with men of every class and description. "Round the dormitory stove, no man asked any thing of his neighbor except his presence," he later wrote, when portraying himself as a waif rescued from an upper class wilderness. "I felt that I was part of a whole, no longer a dog astray in an empty street, a rich, well-fed dog but desperately in need of other dogs to sniff at."

Peace restored peacetime confusion. He settled in Cagnes, where the pall of bereavement, which had hung heavy

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over Les Collettes since Aline's death, now hung lighter thanks to André Heuchling, known as Dédé, a vivacious 18-year-old redhead who waited devotedly upon Auguste, carrying him between his bed and his easel, posing for him, and spreading cheer. The young man found himself at loose ends. His moribund father painted every morning with a brush strapped to stiff, arthritic fingers, but no such indomitable passion animated Jean. Neither he nor the youngest son, Claude, did anything at all, until Auguste suggested that they try ceramics. A wood kiln then made its appearance, and around it sprang up a collective family enterprise. Before long Jean had four people beside him gathering clay from the fields, mixing it with sand, fashioning pottery on a wheel and firing it overnight. As Auguste signed "Renoir" at the bottom of exuberant canvases, Jean baked the name into the bottom of crude earthenware.

Through the father, the son acquired not only a provisional métier but also an unsuitable wife. Auguste died on December 3, 1919. On January 24, 1920, Jean, besottedly in love, married Dédé, who accepted him for reasons of convenience, wanting family membership rather more than the intimacy of this particular Renoir. A child arrived two years later, and the rich young couple, lured away from Cagnes by Paris, bought a sumptuous villa at Marlotte, near Fontainebleau. To satisfy himself, or his father's ghost, that he was not altogether feckless, Jean furnished it with equipment for making pottery.

Not much pottery was produced in the new kiln. On the other hand, a great many movies were seen in Paris, as Jean and Dédé became regular commuters, assuaging the pain of domestic life at Marlotte in the darkness of Right-Bank cinemas. To be sure, Jean's addiction had begun earlier, on furloughs during the war, when he discovered Charlie Chaplin and D.W. Griffith. For him, as for several other young war veterans destined to command the avant-garde stage and screen who found old-fashioned melodrama far more congenial than psychologically sophisticated Boulevard theater, American film was an elixir.

The stock romantic characters of yore came alive again, and Jean embraced them. So, indeed, did Dédé. Bored by motherhood, she fancied herself a Mae Murray or a Gloria Swanson, copying these stars in dress, posture, facial expression. All that Auguste's last model needed was another creative eye, and Jean, who purchased an 8mm camera, set out to validate his wife's self-inventions. "I set foot in the world of the cinema only in order to make my wife a star, intending, when this was done, to return to my pottery studio," he insisted. "I did not foresee that once I had been caught in the machinery I would never be able to escape. If anyone had told me that I was to devote all my money and energies to the making of films, I should have been amazed."

JEAN RENOIR BY DAVID SCHORR FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

With Dédé, or "Catherine Hessling" as she now styled herself (under the strange impression that the alias sounded American), Renoir made six films between 1924 and 1928, none of which enjoyed commercial success. In the first two she played orphaned country girls à la Griffith whose virtue survives one misadventure after another. The third, *Nana*, had her enacting Zola's sluttish Venus in a herky-jerky performance intended to suggest the movements of a frantic marionette.

Renoir's apprenticeship cost him dearly, but his wife's style of life taxed his resources, emotional and financial, to the absolute limit. Dédé was even more Nana off screen than on. Convinced that motherhood tarnished her glamorous persona, she avoided her son as Nana avoids hers. Like Nana, she occupied many beds. And like Nana, who, after failing in her attempt to be a serious actress, gets even by plundering her aristocratic lover, Dédé displayed the material accoutrements of stardom, wearing expensive furs, driving a fast Napier, freighting herself with jewelry. At length the time came for draconian measures. Jean sold many of his father's paintings, though everything in him objected to it, above all his ancient belief that without those images orphanhood would ensue. "Every sale seemed a betrayal," he recalled. "At night I wandered about my house in Marlotte, of which the walls were being ... inexorably stripped bare. I had kept the frames. They were like holes gaping on a hostile world. Never had I felt myself so closely linked to my father's memory." The empty frames piously commemorating his loss may also have symbolized for him the imposture that married life had become.

If Renoir entered cinema to make Dédé a star, not until he abandoned that goal in the shambles of their relationship did he fulfil himself as a cinéaste. Self-fulfilment, however, took some doing. During the late 1920s he directed several unremembered films, including a comedy called *Tire au flanc* (*Goof Off*), which marked his first collaboration with the brilliant Swiss actor Michel Simon. After visiting Berlin, where, amid ominous rallies against the Weimar Republic, he saw Pabst's *Pandora's Box* and met Bertolt Brecht, whose *Threepenny Opera* was all the rage, he did nothing

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cinematic for two years.

This hiatus proved to be extremely important. When it ended in 1931, so had the age of silent films, and in a shift toward Zola-esque realism, Renoir produced *La Chienne* (*The Bitch*), which won almost universal acclaim. One year later came *La Nuit du carrefour* (*Night at the Crossroads*), adapted from a Georges Simenon novel, and soon afterward yet another tale of murder, this one (*Toni*) based on a brief newspaper report, or *fait divers*. By 1935, Renoir stood foremost among French directors, but the films on which his prestige rests today were yet to be made. *Les Bas Fonds* (*The Lower Depths*), *La Grande Illusion* (*Grand Illusion*) and *La Bête humaine* (*The Human Beast*), all starring Jean Gabin, appeared in swift succession. Then, just before World War II broke out, he completed *La Règle du jeu* (*Rules of the Game*), a kind of ship-of-fools tragicomedy, often described as Renoir's masterpiece.

Interspersed among the above were propaganda films that bespoke his aversion to fascism. For Renoir, awareness of what evil impended may have begun during a trip to Germany in May 1933, not long after Hitler's election, when he witnessed Brown Shirts forcing an old Jewish woman to lick the pavement. It was then that the first bonfires were being lit with books condemned by the Nazis, and presently German exiles—among them Brecht, Karl Koch, Kurt Weill, Lotte Lenya, Hans Eissler—found hospitality in Renoir's house outside Paris. Renoir himself gravitated leftward, as radicals, socialists and communists made common cause against reactionary forces bent on smashing the Republic. He befriended a theater company called *Groupe Octobre*, which improvised topical plays at factories, and he breathed deep the cigarette smoke of passionate political symposia.

Invited to Moscow, where *Toni* was shown at a film festival, he brought home none of the misgivings about Soviet society that André Gide would voice in *Retour de l'URSS* (*Return from the USSR*) and he wrote commentary for Louis Aragon's communist paper *Ce Soir*. Sooner than heed a decision of the Filmmakers' Guild to exclude foreigners (xenophobia afflicted many professional associations) he resigned from it on May 23, 1934, with the explanation:

> The situation is tragic and French artists need to earn a living. If I disassociate myself from you, it is because to fight against the foreigners in our guild seems to me a bad way to improve the situation.
>
> It is my conviction that in France an artistic industry can only work if it acquires a certain influence in the world. Paris is not a provincial city, it's one of the world capitals and its influence has stemmed from its absorption of many foreign elements.

By 1936 he had beaten a path between his new flat on the rue des Saules in upper Montmartre and a cultural center run by Aragon lower down, on the rue Navarin.

But radical enthusiasms did not make Renoir a parochial ideologue. His flat on the rue des Saules was much nearer to the Château des Brouillards than to the rue Navarin, and so was his spirit, which had room for people of all walks, encompassing the aristocratic *folie* as well as the proletarian bistro. In *La Grande Illusion*, no character is more admirable than Captain de Boeldieu. "Renoir attached much more importance to ... the precise knowledge [that people] acquire through contact with their work or with nature than he did to their ideology," observed a colleague. "The moment he found something authentic in a person, he was charmed. He would like a blue-frocked mechanic the same way he liked a marquess who wore the right tie at the right time."

This latitude had a moral dimension in his unwillingness either to glorify or to anathematize a man, or to regard political orthodoxy as the ultimate measure of someone's worth. Renoir often asserted that there is no absolute black and white:

> When I entered the cavalry, the first time I said the words "white horse," I became an object of ridicule. It was then explained to me that there are no white horses, any more than there are black horses. There are dark grey horses, light grey horses, dark chestnut horses, and light bay horses; in short, there isn't a single horse that doesn't have a few hairs of another color.

Or, as one character puts it in *La Règle du jeu*, "The terrible thing about this world is that everybody has his reason."

Seven Gough Square

The old philosopher is still among us in the brown coat with the metal buttons and the shirt which ought to be at wash, blinking, puffing, rolling his head, drumming with his fingers, tearing his meat like a tiger, and swallowing his tea in oceans.

Macaulay

"We shall receive no letters in the grave
nor send not even one. You lie, my dear,
in a place of premature tranquillity, and I am left
in an attic room perched on a rickety, three-legged stool
I cannot fix and cannot throw away. Page by page,
I have grown into a great unwieldy tome.
'Dictionary Johnson' I am called, my coat cut
generously to accommodate my words and me.
At the beginning of the World, in Johnson's Bible,
didn't our Maker first create words, then wait,
knowing the proper animal would follow
each name into existence, as love will conjure
a face and form to fix its attentions on?
What does a man, a cat, love? His words, his oysters.
Hodge, licking the oysters in his dish,
exists in a state of sated speechlessness
I envied when your words flew against me.
Tetty, you knew me well enough never to wait for poetry.
Accept now these words, receive my message
in that shadowed place where silence cruelly
predominates. In this dream I am dreaming,
I come to you as I once did, a Nothing and a Nobody
with a proposition, and again we take the great leap,
this time into Eternity. Tetty, it shall not be long.
Your husband, Samuel Johnson"

Elizabeth Spires

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With German forces advancing on Paris in May 1940, Renoir and his new companion, Dido Freire, joined several million Parisians in a chaotic exodus south, hoping to cross the Loire before its bridges were destroyed. After many escapades they fetched up at Cagnes, where telegrams began arriving from Robert Flaherty, a well-known documentary filmmaker then employed by the United States government, who proposed that Renoir visit Hollywood. Loath to desert his shamed, beaten country, he hesitated for some time, until Nazi officials approached him about directing films for the "new France." This sinister interview banished all compunctions. On December 20 he and Dido boarded the American steamship *Siboney* in Lisbon. It deposited them at Jersey City on New Year's Eve. Ten days later they reached Los Angeles. And in mid-January, Jean Renoir, who would soon meet again those German exiles he had welcomed outside Paris, entered Twentieth-Century Fox with a one-year contract to direct two films.

Although, as his correspondence shows, Renoir loved America straight away, after several months in Darryl Zanuck's fiefdom, the netherworld of southern California felt more like purgatory than Elysium. Nagged by memories of orphaned children cast adrift during the recent exodus, he wrote a screenplay on the subject, only to be told that war stories would not do. Also unwelcome at Fox were Saint-Exupéry's *Terre des hommes* (*Wind, Sand, and Stars*), which Renoir particularly cherished, and the idea of a film adapted from Knut Hamsun's *Hunger*. Zanuck, in turn, proposed various potboilers. They finally settled on something called *Swamp Water*, but their agreement set the stage for further strife.

Wanting to shoot the whole film on location in the Okefenokee swamp, Renoir found himself treated as a dotty French purist. Everything that others admired irked Zanuck: his fastidious camera work, his eye for atmosphere and background, his many discussions with the crew. "I'm having a tough time," he confided to Charles Boyer on August 3, 1941:

> [Zanuck] would have liked me to make this film very quickly, and be contented with shooting what is in the screenplay without bringing anything of myself to it. I know nothing of this type of work. In France, rather than being a director, I was a storyteller, transforming a sheet of paper on to a screen. The outcome of this wrong way of thinking about my work is that I am in the process of driving Zanuck to despair by my slowness. Any moment now I expect him to dispense with my services, for which I can hardly blame him.
>
> The deplorable state of affairs unfortunately coincides with a painful new outbreak of my old wound from the last war. All this makes me think that very soon I am going to have to break with this life, gather together some money I've put aside, and bury myself in some little provincial hole-in-the-wall town where I can replace the camera with the pen, and try writing a book.

The mogul and the cinéaste parted after this collaboration. That *Swamp Water* subsequently enjoyed a success at the box office inspired no desire in either one to reconcile their differences. Renoir, buoyed by the arrival, first of his beloved Gabrielle Renard, who had married an American named Conrad Slade, and then of his son Alain, soon recovered his zest for directing.

One more futile attempt to operate as a studio employee led him to mount an independent production. The result was *This Land is Mine*, a film that described French citizens living under Nazi occupation in a more sympathetic light than the media generally shed on their predicament. "This terrible question of the enemy *à domicile* is probably the most important of those presented by our unfortunate time," he wrote to the literary agent Maximilian Becker. Other films followed, in slow succession and with diminishing effect: *The Southerner* (which won first prize at the Venice Film Festival), *The Diary of a Chambermaid*, *The Woman on the Beach*. Nothing came easy.

After the war, Renoir, who had been almost as critical of opportunistic Gaullists as of opportunistic Vichyites, remained in California until 1949, not least among his reasons being a desire to produce an American masterpiece before leaving American soil. "I've got it in my head not to leave Hollywood without having made at least one film that satisfies me entirely," he told an old friend in January 1947:

> It's a very arduous enterprise. Not because production is more difficult here than elsewhere. On the contrary, I have the feeling that if one knows what one wants, one can try anything in the framework of American cinema. What's stopping me is the difficulty of gathering together my own ideas in a world and language new to me.

In a letter written eleven months later to Claude, Renoir lamented the fact that his "Hollywood career" had not justified his European reputation but declared that he wouldn't "give up the fight," even if low-budget films of the kind he envisaged seldom made ripples. "The subjects which [I and big-studio representatives] talked about aren't attractive to me, and I feel a little like Julius Caesar who, when passing a poor Gaulish village, said to his generals that he would rather be number one there than number two in Rome."

Renoir never left America once for all. A house on Leona Drive in Benedict Canyon was his foothold here, and he died in it on February 12, 1979. During the intervening years he made eight films (notably *The River*), wrote prolifically and surrounded himself with those friends whose names recur throughout LoBianco's and Thompson's selection: Ingrid Bergman, Jeanne Moreau, Clifford Odets, Rumer Godden, Henri Cartier-Bresson and, of course, Dido, whom he married. After 1970, when he retired from cinema, the consecration of his oeuvre by younger filmmakers compensated in some measure for ill health.

Of particular interest is his correspondence with François Truffault, who became a friend, a protégé, indeed, a surrogate son. Only months before he died, Renoir sent Truffault, from Beverly Hills, the letter that closes this volume. Drawing him near even as it bids him adieu, it embodies Jean Renoir's generosity and elegance:

> I am sending you this note for no practical purpose. You know how fond I am of you, and I know how fond you are of me. I am repeating it aloud because I enjoy it. It is like a brief farewell on a station platform. All that is missing is the smell of soot from Victoria Station.
>
> You don't need anybody to help you transport your friends into a world whose citizens are all genuine knights. The New Wave gathers together its barons at a round table.

FREDERICK BROWN is the author most recently of *Zola* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux).

TRB *continued from page 6*

right now, mainly from home satellite dishes. And—*eventually*—they will face competition even in providing broadbandwidth Internet access. (Via a broadbandwidth version of cellular-phone technology, competitors may skip the arduous task of laying fiber into the home.) The current telecom legislation would thus move us toward a grass-roots dataway, if in needlessly erratic and not perfectly egalitarian fashion. Indeed, as the Internet's relentless and rapid evolution suggests, there is a certain inevitability about the diffuse web at the heart of the liberal vision of the dataway. Some pure and simple ideas even Washington can't completely corrupt.

ROBERT WRIGHT

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

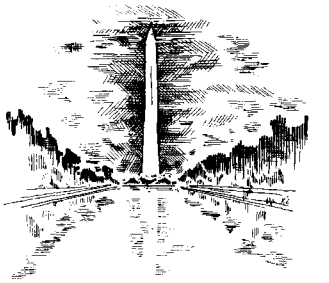
Breeders

"Casey still can't quite believe you can't just pay somebody to carry your child," he sneered after she'd buzzed off to the Chanel boutique.
—Russell Calloway, the protagonist of Jay McInerney's *Brightness Falls*

I HAVE THE FEELING THAT MCINERney can't quite believe it either, judging by his wife's astonishing account of the couple's recent foray into surrogate motherhood in the July *Vogue*. As the story opens, Jay and 42-year-old Helen Bransford, a jewelry designer, have just decamped to Nashville, where medically mediated conception is apparently regarded as a bit outré. The only womb available, it seems, belongs to "Hope," a chain-smoking, downtrodden Diane Arbus character who makes $8,000 a year working the night shift at a local diner. There is, to say the least, a cultural gap between Helen and her gestational vessel. In an accompanying *Vogue* pictorial, Helen, with her tousled blond shag, has the look of someone who would be at home in jodhpurs. Hope, who is not pictured, favors acid-washed jeans and is said to resemble the actress Roseanne.

WHEN HOPE CALLS FROM A PAY phone (she has no phone at home) and agrees to incubate their child, the McInerneys, ever brave and spiritual, prepare to scale new inner heights. "Metaphysically it felt perfectly logical," gushes Helen Bransford. The beleaguered contract mom, meanwhile, evidently sees it as just another wearisome low-paying service job. "She's several thousand dollars in debt," Bransford explains. "And she needs a car." The jewelry designer goes on to praise her surrogate's rustic simplicity and "brusque, no-frills manner." Despite these virtues, however, it's clear that the patrician Bransford does not yearn to see Hope's genetic impress on her tiny offspring. Having corralled a blue-collar womb, Bransford must importune her Social Register acquaintances for their donated eggs. After several humiliating rebuffs, she finally enlists Jesse, an intrepid college friend who "doesn't miss a beat" in offering an ovum. During the hormone injection phase, Jesse moves into the McInerney's mansion, where she is cossetted and pampered and plied with elegant baubles. "A masseuse one day, a manicurist the next," burbles Bransford.

NO SUCH TREATS ARE IN STORE for poor Hope; and the scrofulous surrogate, impregnated with twins, is soon growing mad enough to chew nails. "Regardless of how many videos and gifts we take her, she never utters a thank you," pouts Bransford. It's easy to see why. As Jay, Helen and Jesse cuddle and coo, she's battling nausea, bloating and violent mood swings. Helen, meanwhile, "wants to carve out nooks and crannies to burrow into with the babies." Clad in tasteful cotton caftans, she flutters around Hope's dilapidated lodgings, touting the virtues of folic acid and warning her not to have sex, lest she dislodge anyone. "She told me it was the last damn thing on her mind and not to worry," twinkles Helen. Left to her own devices, no doubt Helen would have spent her pregnancy in luminescent dignity, sipping uterus-toning tea and piping Brahms into her womb. But try as she might to force Hope to eschew junk food, she can only watch in horror as her mother-for-hire polishes off Big Macs and puffs away on high-tar cigarettes sure to crinkle the babies' delicate lungs. When Helen visits her apartment, she is so appalled by its stale disarray that she pens a letter to the little polliwogs: "Please know I'll do better by you.... You won't have to breathe smoke, eat McDonald's or listen to country music TV."



HAPPILY, LITTLE MAISIE AND JOHN III are coaxed into the world unharmed, and Helen proclaims herself delighted with the experience. "The fear of creating a breeding class of women seems ludicrous." Really? Though Helen's saga is clearly intended as a heartwarming testimonial to the miracles of modern science, there's something distinctly creepy about her aristocratic annexing of Hope's uterus. We're apparently meant to despise the trailer-trash surrogate; yet it's hard not to see Hope's deep-fried mutinies as an act of political resistance. Pregnant women are not human incubators. If stroller lust impinged on the McInerneys' blue-eyed good fortune, they should have adopted a refugee child. Or another dewy-eyed baby goat, like the one Helen is nuzzling in the *Vogue* pictorial.

AT 24, I HAD PLANNED TO PUT OFF baby-hunger for another year or two. But that was before I read the *Atlantic*'s recent cover story, "HOW OLD IS TOO OLD TO HAVE CHILDREN?" "The 1-in-8 rate of impaired fecundity for those ages 25 to 34," cautions the *Atlantic*, "don't appear to be ter ribly good odds." Impaired fecundity a 25? I suppose this is the logical terminu of an annoying new media phenomenon infertility chic. Even the brassiest of femi nist battle-axes are succumbing. Ger maine Greer and Betty Friedan, both o whom once urged young women to g out and make a living for themselves, nov lament their barren state and condemr delayed childbearing as patriarchal hein ousness. The most recent convert is lib eral essayist Anne Taylor Fleming. In he weepy tome, *Motherhood Deferred*, she de plores her "incompetent cervix," and de scribes her ten-year baby quest as "a pri mal absorption ... physiological and psycho logical stranglehold."

SINCE WHEN DII the failure to conjure child so definitivel blight an independen woman's life? Certainly part of the blame has t lie with the fertilit industry. "By taking u an activity heretofore reserved for th young (pregnancy) ... these women ar refusing to retire from the glamorou life of young adulthood," babbles pro creative pioneer Dr. Bernard Beck i the latest *Town and Country*. "With boost from technology, there's n longer a point at which women have t retire from the game." As Flemin makes clear, there was no glamour i the various intratubal inseminations tha sapped her morale and imperiled he health, all the while "dangling a baby" i front of her ever-empty arms.

EQUALLY UNSAVORY ARE THI gloomy ruminations of late-bloomin single moms who do manage to realiz their genetic destiny. "At 35 years old, Anne Lamott broods in *Operating Instru tions*, "I may be too old and too tired t be having my first child." In seam detail, she chronicles her senescen body's rebellion against first-time moth erhood. She has developed "a horribl new body odor, the result of some terr ble endocrine imbalance." Her "poo gumdrop nipples ... have turned int purple slugs with the texture of rhin hide." And so on. It's tempting to try t find deep meaning in these Jobian tra vails; but in the end, we can only fa back on the *Atlantic*'s exhortation t early childbearing, and remember th magazine's cheerfully modest policy pre scription: "In light of the biological rea ities they face, women would do well t press for a reconfiguration of society. Hope will be leading the charge.

RUTH SHALI

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Drawing the Line

Cutting federal education funding now, President Clinton said in a recent speech, would be like cutting the defense budget at the height of the Cold War. What he meant was that with the threat of armed conflict and totalitarianism in those days, slashing resources would have both weakened us and shown a lack of resolve. As it turned out, sustaining our defense effort was exactly what worked.

Today, our society depends even more on brainpower than on military might because the competition among nations is mainly economic. And economic strength today—as well as the prospect for our democracy tomorrow—requires a strong education system, one that sets high academic standards and provides equal opportunity for all students to succeed. Republicans, Democrats, and the public have been in agreement about this for at least 12 years, and where higher standards have taken hold, we are seeing results.

Republican leaders have targeted the 17 percent of the budget that goes to education and other domestic programs.

The new Republican majority in Congress is now breaking that bipartisan compact. In the House this month, members are working on legislation that will determine how much the government can spend for the 1996 fiscal year that begins October 1. These appropriations bills spell out in dollars and cents how the Republicans intend to reshape public priorities as they carry out their plan to balance the budget in an imprudently short seven years. And the 1996 numbers for education are disastrous.

After the election last fall, the Republicans indicated they would approach the budget-balancing task fair-mindedly. But in their budget blueprint, Republican leaders have targeted the 17 percent of the budget that goes to education and other discretionary domestic programs. From that small wedge, they plan to squeeze 42 percent of the $1.2 trillion in spending cuts they're after. Meanwhile, they will increase defense spending and give $245 billion in tax cuts mainly to wealthier individuals and corporations.

The public agrees on the need to put brakes on federal spending. But polls show that Americans do *not* want Congress to fund tax cuts for the wealthy by gutting programs that help ordinary citizens make the most of their lives. In education, this has meant supplementing the meager academic resources that states and school districts provide poor children; making schools safe and drug-free; working to raise academic standards; and putting a college education within reach of millions who could not afford the cost without financial aid.

The House education bill slashes deeply into these commitments for next year. It cuts the Title I program for the most disadvantaged learners by $1.1 billion, or 17 percent. It zeroes out Goals 2000 (funded at $372 million this year), a bipartisan initiative adopted by both the Bush and Clinton administrations to help states and school districts raise academic standards. It cuts $250 million (78 percent) from the related professional-development program that will assist teachers to teach to higher standards. And it lops off $266 million, or 60 percent, of the funding for the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program.

These are strategies that *work*. And they play an important part—just as the commitment of resources did during the Cold War—in sustaining the national effort to raise educational standards and student achievement. But the Republican leadership is intent on eliminating the federal role altogether. Senate moderates fought off a proposal to eliminate the Education Department itself. The appropriations bill makes clear that the alternate plan is to bleed federal education programs to death.

If the bloodletting begins on schedule this fall, it won't be Congressional Republicans who immediately feel faint. It will be states and cities, which each year budget hundreds of millions in federal allocations for a wide variety of public purposes, including education. Here's a sampling of what the cuts will mean, according to the Education Department and the Council of Great City Schools. In Goals 2000, Safe and Drug-Free Schools, and Title I aid alone, Alabama will lose $33 million; California, $200 million; Florida, $74 million; Michigan, $73 million; New York, $149 million; Texas, $154 million. The House cuts will cost New York City an estimated $118 million; Los Angeles, $57 million; Chicago, $41 million; Philadelphia, $24 million; and Dade County, Fla., $20 million. And it's not just big cities; virtually every community will be affected. Under pressure from these and other federal cuts, localities will have only two painful choices—shrink services or raise taxes. In either case, ordinary citizens will bear the brunt.

President Clinton, not Presidents Reagan or Bush, cut half a trillion dollars from the deficit in two years—without causing citizens pain or upending the public interest in education as a vital national enterprise. The President is right again about holding the line on education. And now is the time for millions of Americans who also draw the line to let their representatives know that they won't tolerate mortgaging the nation's future just to balance the federal budget in time for a re-election campaign.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1995 by Albert Shanker.

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An Open Letter to the United States House of Representatives

The nation's current communications policies restrain competition, discourage technological innovation and stifle economic growth and job creation – all to the disadvantage of American consumers.

These outdated policies must be changed. It's time to free markets and encourage new technologies for the 21st Century.

The Coalition for Communications Reform Now! urges the House of Representatives to act now to pass H.R. 1555, The Communications Act of 1995.

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Pass H.R. 1555 Now.

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